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THE AESTHETIC ELEMENT  
IN MORALITY

BY

FRANK CHAPMAN SHARP.

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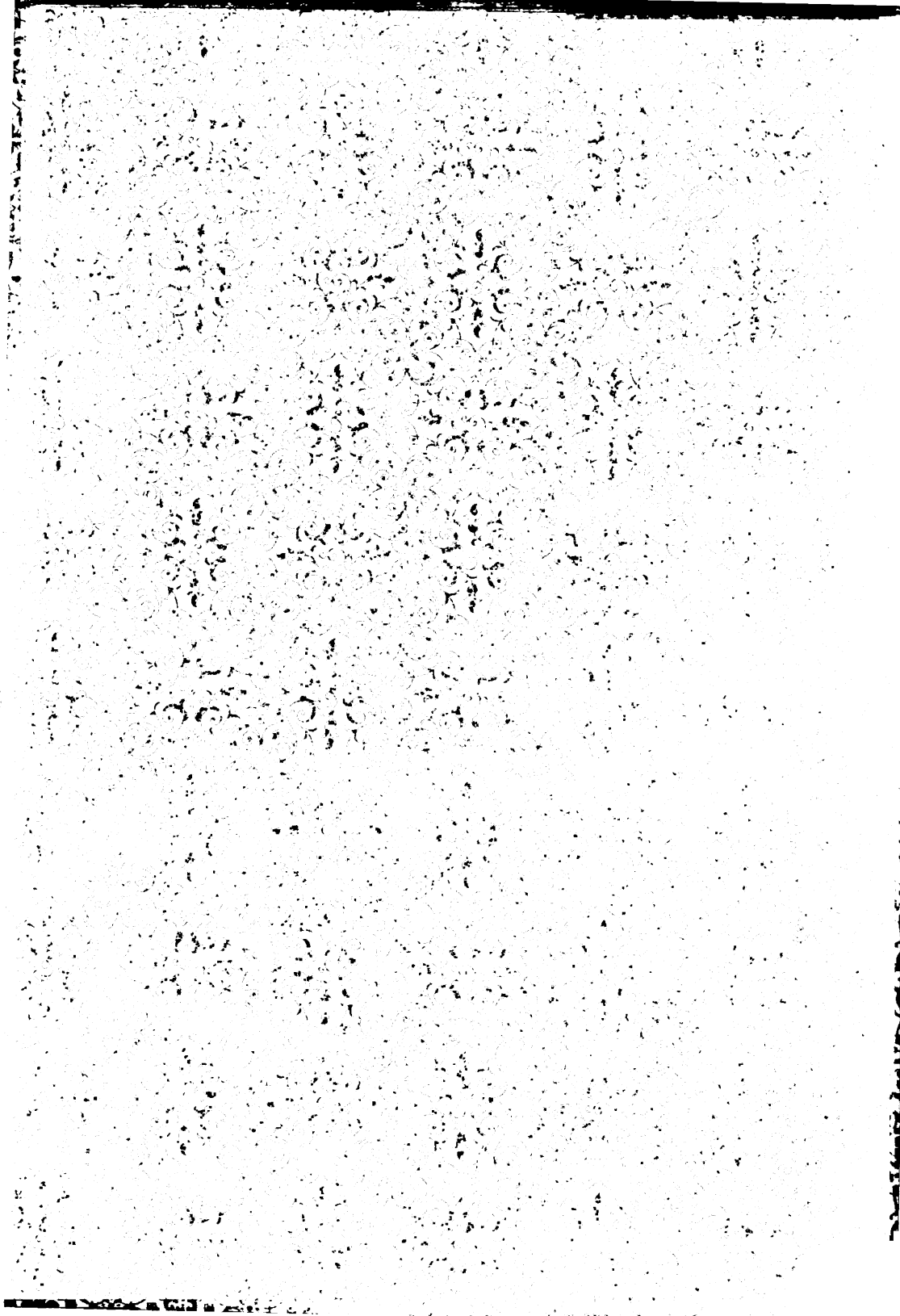
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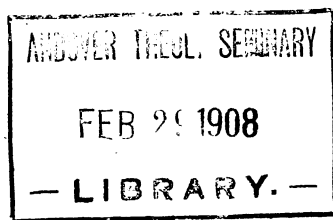
THE AESTHETIC ELEMENT  
IN MORALITY

*AND ITS PLACE IN A*  
UTILITARIAN THEORY OF MORALS.

BY

FRANK CHAPMAN SHARP, PH. DR.

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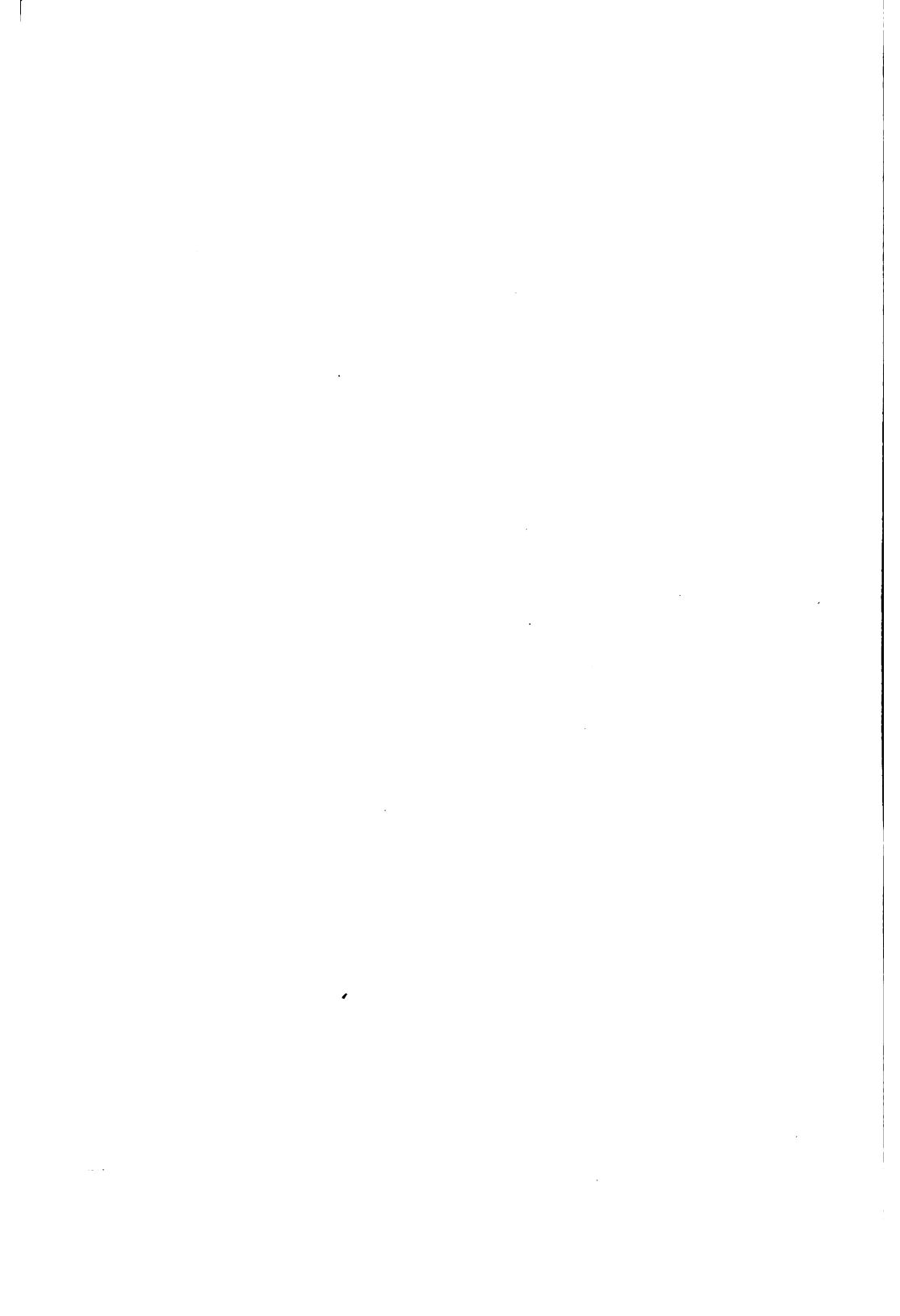


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## INTRODUCTION.

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"The habit of the Greek mind in estimating the value of moral nobleness and elevation of character by their power of gratifying and impressing a spectator," (Sully) has not been confined exclusively to the Hellenic race, or to the few centuries comprised under the term classical antiquity. Even in savage tribes, the military hero, and the wise and good ruler cannot but be the objects of direct respect and admiration, while even in the most matter-of-fact society that modern industrialism has ever succeeded in producing, a simple reference to the to be sure oftentimes fulsome praise of the obituary notice will show that the man of principle is valued for something else besides his mere usefulness as a machine for grinding out happiness. And this is true not only of the moral judgments of every day life, in ethical theory too it will be found that the aesthetic element, far from being a peculiarity of the Greek systems, has played a very important part ever since the paradoxes of Hobbes set earnest men thinking once more about the nature of virtue. The names of Shaftesbury, Schiller and Herbart will at once occur to every reader in this connexion, but they are by no means the only representatives of this type of thought, for the phenomena which they perceived and were therefore able to point out and describe, have served as the real foundation of a very

large number of attempts to vindicate the worth of virtue, although only too often their originators have been but half-conscious of the fact. Just where such theories belong in the history of ethical thought, a brief survey of the field will enable us to discover.

Moral systems may be divided into two great classes, *teleological* (to use a happy term introduced by Prof. Paulsen) and — if we may venture upon another innovation in terminology — *deontological*. The former looks upon all morality as the product of an ideal, the latter as having its essence in the feeling of obligation; the one starts out from the idea of the good, the other from the idea of "ought" or duty; the one is interested before all else in the inquiry as to the worth of the various possible ends of human activity, the other as to the origin and validity of the idea of obligation. Among representatives of the former class, two different sorts of ideals have been proposed, the one by the Utilitarians — the egoistic and the altruistic — who present as the final end of action the happiness of the individual, or of mankind respectively; the other by those who hold up character as the proper end, or as it is sometimes termed self-culture, or self-realization. This is identical with what the Eighteenth Century called *perfection*, but the term is extremely objectionable as substituting for the name of a definite quality, a word which merely signifies the agreement of things in general with any ideal that may have been previously formed of them. Among recent writers this position has been championed by Prof. Paulsen where the ideal in question is presented as recommending itself purely on its own merits, and by the late Thomas Hill Green, who backs it up by metaphysical considerations which give his system a touch of the deontological. Of the second class,

some writers go out from the bare consciousness of obligation, of which type of thought we regard Butler as the purest example. He has been followed by the great body of Scotch thinkers, and all of them, despite any protestations they may make to the contrary, and despite all the ingenuity they may at times employ to conceal the fact from themselves and others, are as thorough-going Nominalists as was ever Duns Scotus or William of Occam. The other sub-species of the genus "moralist" may properly be called the realistic deontologists. They have the keenest perception of the worth — of the "infinite worth" — of virtue, but hold, each in his own way, that its value is inextricably bound up with, or dependent upon the notion of *ought*. In the case of a Kant this view takes form in the position that morality is only definable by means of the idea of obligation; with a Martineau, in the assertion that the fundamental fact of the moral experience is the consciousness of an obligation to prefer certain excellencies of character to any other good.

Of the four schools into which ethical thinkers thus appear to be divided, we have said the second and the last lay special weight upon the worth of character, but the distinctive peculiarity of this position lies not so much in the fact that character is valued as in the *kind of value* attributed to it. For both Butlerism and Utilitarianism take the greatest possible interest in the character of the individual, the former because in it alone can be found the pledge of complete submission to the demands of duty, the latter because it is the source of all he does, and although accidents will happen, and an act sometimes have a result which could not be foreseen, yet after all, in the great majority of cases good intentions result in useful actions.

We do not call a piece of machinery bad and ship it out of the factory because the production it has just turned out chances to be ruined in the next room in finishing it off. Thus it is that in judging a piece of machinery we ask first of all whether it can be relied upon to do good work, and this same principle holds for the Utilitarian estimate of men. But what distinguishes the other view from such a one as this is, that it attributes an *intrinsic* worth to character apart from and independently of its value, either as a sign or a source of something else. In order to complete our general survey of the field of ethical philosophy, it will accordingly be necessary to inquire wherein this worth is held to consist.

At the very outset of such an investigation we find ourselves face to face with the difficulty that an extremely large number of moralists are far from clear as to the true nature of their own position. This makes any such attempt as here proposed almost equivalent to writing a history of ethics. We shall therefore confine ourselves in this place to bare statements, leaving for the body of our treatise the justification of the views here advanced. We remember that the war has always been waged between the Utilitarians and the Intuitionists (the latter a name applied collectively to all who are not the former). Perhaps then we can set about to obtain an answer to our question in no better way than to find out what some well-known combatant of the latter party regards as the distinguishing characteristic of the position he champions, as opposed to that of the other side. Says Mr. Lecky: "It will probably appear to many of my readers that (the) two concessions — that we have the power of recognizing a distinction of kind in our pleasures, and that we have a perception of beauty

in our actions — make the difference between Mr. Mill and intuitive moralists not very much more than verbal.” And this is not an isolated statement of some irresponsible individual. It is quoted as here given by one who is without doubt the most eminent living representative of this school, Dr. Martineau, and stamped with the authority of his approval as being a “perfectly reasonable judgment”<sup>1</sup>. Now if we are willing to admit that the well-known doctrine of a difference of quality among pleasures is only another product of the aesthetic point of view — a proposition which will be considered at length in another place<sup>2</sup> — we have here the whole thing in a nutshell. The Utilitarian values character merely as a source of actions useful to society; the Intuitionalist on the other hand values it for itself — that is to say, for its beauty. An exhaustive statement of the points at issue between the two schools this cannot quite claim to be, for it omits all mention of the great contests that have been carried on over the idea of obligation, and ignores the fact that for one party — the followers of Butler — this is the beginning, middle, and end of morality. However it may serve as a statement of the fact that when intrinsic worth is attributed to character, the quality affirmed of it is no other than beauty.

How large a number of our readers will be ready to agree with this proposition upon its bare statement we are unable to say. We shall however have frequent occasion to return to it in the following, where we shall not as here confine ourselves to dogmatic statements and where we hope to succeed in throwing some perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> See *Types of Ethical Theory* II: 307.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Chapter IV.

unexpected light upon the subject, so that our view may appear more plausible before the conclusion of our investigation is reached.

One restriction to the above will however have to be made. There is namely one form of the instinctive admiration for character which we all share that cannot be explained on an aesthetic basis alone. We are all conscious of a peculiar feeling of sympathy for, and pleasure in those who have the same fundamental tastes and interests that we have, above all for those who are fellow-workers with us for some common end dear to our hearts. An example of the former will be supplied by artists or scientific men; of the latter, by old army comrades. The altruist experiences the same feeling for his fellow-laborer in the service of man; the Intuitionalist, for his companion in the path of duty. Accordingly a good man recognizes in every man of principle a comrade in the same army, fighting for the same great cause, and thus is conscious of a warm feeling of affection for, or at any rate approbation of him which is in the first instance independent of what he succeeds in actually accomplishing. This accounts for the fact that Kant's praise of the good will appeals to every class of readers. But as something felt in common by all who have any kind of a moral ideal, whatever its nature, as depending upon a previously existent community of interests which must therefore have their source in something else, and finally as by no means confined to those who are in *moral* harmony, the existence of this feeling cannot give a ground of distinction between two types of ethical theory. It is nevertheless at the bottom of a great deal of what the Intuitionalists have to say about the intrinsic worth of character.

In undertaking then, a study of beauty as exhibited in conduct and character, we are not merely examining some of the most striking facts of the moral life, we are investigating phenomena that have given rise, directly or indirectly, to a large number of the existing ethical systems, and that are moreover the cause of their vitality to day, despite the uncounted plausibilities which the Utilitarians have been urging all these years of controversy. "Nothing is destroyed until it is replaced", says Comte, and this is as true of a theory as of anything else; so that if when brought face to face with the problem of moral beauty, Utilitarianism never gets beyond the helpless attitude of Sidgwick and Stephen, or the superficiality of Bain and Laas, we must not be surprised to find the general position of which they are the distinguished champions rejected as unsatisfactory and one-sided by a goodly proportion of just those thinkers whose moral natures are most deep. A scientific theory must be able to explain all the facts it is called upon to deal with, or failing in this, give way to something else that can. The problem then, whether Utilitarianism has any place in its system for the "beauty of holiness" is one, a negative answer to which would compel it to renounce its claim of being a satisfactory and comprehensive theory of ethics.

In view of the importance of such a question, the task we have set before us does not confine itself merely to an inquiry into the nature of the aesthetic element in character, but includes also an attempt to define its relation to the general welfare as an end of action, with a view to obtaining a consistent and satisfactory criterion of right and wrong. This however presupposes definite views as to the nature and extent of the claims of altruism, and as there unfortunately exists as yet no



absolute agreement here even among Utilitarians, we have been compelled to commence by defining our position on this subject. This is followed by a discussion of the intrinsic worth of character, which paves the way for an analysis of moral beauty. This completed, we find ourselves ready for our last problem, the relation of the two possible ends of action thus presented for our choice. And as beauty in general may be regarded either as a good, an ideal which we naturally strive to realize, or as involving in its very nature an obligation to pursue it, we have examined the subject successively from each of these two points of view.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE THEORY OF ALTRUISM.*

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The aim and scope of the study of ethics have been conceived and defined in two different ways. According to Adam Smith, "in treating of the principles of morals there are two questions to be considered, first, wherein does virtue consist? and secondly, by what power or faculty in the mind is it recommended to us?"<sup>1</sup> and this is the conception of the subject held, in the main, by the modern world generally. Regarded from this point of view ethics is a *science*, an explanation of the existing — of the nature of virtue considered as a phenomenon of social life, and of the causes of moral judgments and moral actions as actually observed. Consistently with this, the scheme of concrete duties is exhibited either as the result of an examination of our moral consciousness (Intuitionism) or as a deduction from the principle found to express the essence of virtue, e. g. that of a maximum of happiness. It is true that the motive which leads to the study of these problems is (as is indeed the case with almost all the sciences)

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<sup>1</sup> *Theory of Moral Sentiments* Part VII Sec. I.

practical interest and not mere curiosity, and yet the method of procedure is precisely the same as if the opposite were true.

But the name of ethics has also been given to an investigation of a different nature. When in the development of the race a certain grade of intelligence has been reached, man becomes able to look upon his life from an objective point of view, whereupon he cannot but discover that it presents a spectacle anything but satisfactory. He sees that like a straw blown about by the wind, so he has hitherto been the sport of ever-changing impulses. Possessed now by this passion, now by that, the result has been that he has often gained nothing, and even where the pursuit of a single end has been persevered in till the goal has been reached, the resultant pleasure has all too frequently cruelly disappointed his expectations; or again, snatching at some glittering bauble that has happened to catch his eye, he has more than once sacrificed some permanent good, or brought upon himself pain or trouble. And so he at length awakens to the fact that he is in a world governed by unchanging laws, which declare, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap", where that which is outwardly fair and attractive is often in reality bitter as apples of Sodom, or at best tasteless, and above all, where of the numberless demands he makes upon life, expecting with the sanguineness born of inexperience that all will be met, only a limited number can be responded to, so that at every turn he is forced to choose between this and that, an inexorable fate forbidding him the enjoyment of both. In such a world as this, he comes in time to perceive the necessity not only of the utmost skill and forethought in the adjustment of means to ends, but before all else, of a

careful comparison of the relative value of the different possible ends themselves. And so he will ask himself the old question which occupied such a great share of the attention of the Greek philosophers, what is the highest good, and in case this be not one all-inclusive whole, in what order shall I arrange the other good things which the world has to offer, in order that I may have some definite principle to guide me in making my choices? When a man puts these questions to himself with a view to ordering his life according to some consistent plan, then the problems which present themselves belong to ethics in the second sense of the term. Ethics for him is the "sitting down in a cool hour" and determining what ultimate end or ends he shall habitually pursue.<sup>1</sup>)

What then, he would begin by asking, do we mean by "good," or "a good"? It is, he would find, the expression of a relation to us as feeling beings. Everything that is good must be "good for something" as was pointed out by the founder of moral philosophy. That is apprehended as a good by me which is found to satisfy my actual desires, and that alone, for nothing about whose existence or non-existence I am perfectly indifferent can appeal to me as a good. Only that, therefore, can be spoken of as a good for any man which would be capable of satisfying some

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<sup>1</sup> This difference in method is not to be too hastily identified with that in the principles of the two great ethical schools referred to in the Introduction. As a matter of fact the latter method was the sole one employed by the Greek philosophers, while the former has been the favorite with all classes of thinkers ever since the rise of modern philosophy, and as will appear later neither is complete without the other.

desire of his when all the possibilities of his nature had reached their complete development.<sup>1</sup>

But if "good" be correlative with desire, to which of our desires will the highest good correspond? Will it be found in the satisfaction of the most intense, or the most permanent, or the most distinctively human (the so-called rational), or is desire in so far simple that it is possible to point to some common quality in all that arouses it? Psychological hedonism claims the last to be the case, and holds that in every instance the object awakening desire is the mental representation of some pleasurable state (or where we are in a state of actual suffering, the representation of one of entire or comparative freedom from pain). Whatever objections different members of this school might be ready to urge against certain portions of John Stuart Mill's psychology of the emotions, they would all agree in subscribing to the statement that "to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences) and to think of it as pleasant, are one and the same thing".<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand perhaps the majority of the most prominent moralists of to-day hold the view which was introduced into modern ethical speculation by Bishop Butler, one of the latest and best statements of which is given by Prof. Sidgwick in his *Methods of Ethics*<sup>3</sup>, a presentation which is careful to avoid certain exaggerations of the original formulation of the doctrine, in the first of the two sermons on the Love of our Neighbor. Prof. Sidgwick does not deny that pleasure as

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<sup>1</sup> This wording is meant to meet an objection urged by Sidgwick in *Methods of Ethics* Bk. I Ch. IX sec. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Utilitarianism* p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Fourth Edition* 1890.

such is at times the direct object of desire, as in the case of the pleasures of sight, hearing, and smell, together with many emotional ones, but he claims that there are desires and aversions which have not pleasure and pain for their objects — conscious impulses to produce and avert results other than the agent's own feelings (p. 45). Nor would the express admission of *others'* feelings among the objects of one's desire save the theory in his eyes. We desire a thousand things besides pleasure he would say, food, knowledge, power, fame, the admiration of those about us, etc. etc. and that directly and independently of the pleasure they may happen to bring with them.

It will be necessary to examine this view in detail. How does it stand related to the facts of the case? There can be no doubt that hunger for instance is something other than the desire to enjoy certain agreeable tastes, but is it not a case of aversion from present pain? Prof. Sidgwick thinks not, maintaining that it only becomes definitely painful in the case of exceptionally prolonged abstinence from food (p. 47). But if not painful in some degree from the first, it is difficult to see why mere lapse of time should change its nature. The truth is, civilized man seldom experiences what hunger is; we stop our work and go to the table as mechanically when the bell rings as we put one foot before the other in walking; and even when not leading a regular life we obey the first faint summons of appetite just as we avoid all pains immediately upon the signs of their approach, without waiting for them to become acute. The difficulties which a feeling like hunger, more especially in its first stages, present to introspection seem to be due to the fact that it is not definitely localized in any one point or sharply marked off portion of the

body. No one would hesitate to call the feeling produced by the slight prick of a pin pain, and yet the same person might easily be for a moment surprised at hearing the same name applied to that condition when for some reason, we ourselves know not what, everything seems to be out of sorts, and the world looks as if seen through blue glasses. Such unlocalized pains must rise to a considerable degree of intensity before we expressly recognize them as such, and it is for this reason doubtless (together with the fact that we more often experience its advanced stages) that most persons would be more ready to admit thirst under this category than hunger, although in reality they both belong to the same class of feelings. And to this same circumstance is also due the failure to recognize in the love of freedom a feeling based on aversion from the pains arising out of the consciousness of impotence with respect to another; in the love of knowledge (along with the desire for the consciousness of power which it brings with it) a direct aversion from the pains of unsatisfied curiosity; and in a great many pursuits which seem to have no emotional root whatever, a desire for distraction, that is, relief from the horrors of ennui or from the uneasiness attendant upon the interruption of a habitual form of activity-analyses, which though by no means exhaustive, may serve to hint at the real nature of the phenomena here under consideration.

In all these cases desire undoubtedly differs from a mere state of pain, but only in so far as it includes a mental representation of the means of relief. Thus the tooth-ache, for instance, awaits only the belief in the soothing qualities of a given nostrum to become a "disinterested impulse" towards tooth-ache drops. The idea of pleasure, according to this view, is capable of arous-

ing desire in virtue of the fact that the consciousness of its absence or the thought that it is slipping from our grasp tends to awaken a feeling of uneasiness or some allied form of pain. The fact that we occasionally try to get rid of a desire, not by satisfying it, that is, removing its cause, but by directly suppressing it, does not prove that the impulse which leads to the one action, and that which leads to the other are two different things (as is claimed at the bottom of p. 47) as is evident when we remember that we sometimes attempt to do this very same thing with the tooth-ache. If there is no medicine to be had we try to divert our minds in some way so as to forget the pain, the "disinterested impulse" towards tooth-ache drops becoming in this case an impulse towards the object or train of thought that promises forgetfulness, and such a case differs in no way from the attempt to free ourselves from sympathetic pain (p. 50) *or from anxiety about our own future either*, by deliberately forcing our attention into other channels. The fact that one man frees himself from troublesome thoughts about the relation of his income to his expenditures, for instance, by setting to work and putting his affairs in order, while another man seeks to reach the same end by plunging into a course of wild dissipation, can surely never prove that the anxiety in the one instance differed in any respect from that in the other.

There are cases again when what looks at first sight like the desire for a definite thing, is certainly the desire for the pleasure to be gained through that thing. This is true of pursuit, for instance (p. 48). Both in the chase and in games, what is desired is the pleasant sense of superior power or skill which comes with victory, and this is why, in the latter instance, men



are interested in games where chance enters (apart from the factitious interest given by putting up money stakes) only in so far as here they may have to contend not only with their opponent, but with their opponent plus fortune, which naturally renders a victory all the more glorious. Children on the other hand can enjoy games of pure chance, because they attribute their good fortune to some imaginary excellence in themselves. In the chase, or in any pursuit which takes possession of all ones energies, the final end, as we all know by experience, disappears temporarily from consciousness, and the only feeling left is the sense of intense activity; it is by confounding this latter with the desire (at least he claims that the desire is one of its essential elements p. 48) that Prof. Sidgwick is able to arrive at the rather surprising result, that desire may sometimes be pleasurable. But as a matter of fact, though the desire is guiding the man all the time it is not present to consciousness at all, just as when I make up my mind to go to a certain house in a certain street I may take all the steps and make all the turns without another thought of my destination, or without any desire to reach it appearing clearly in consciousness again. And yet it is there all the time, in the back-ground, so to speak, ready to come forward and make its power felt the moment an impediment arises; for let me on the way meet a bore with whom I happen to be acquainted and who insists upon stopping me and telling me all his troubles, and immediately the thought of my goal and the desire to reach it return into consciousness and become more and more definite and intense the longer I am detained. As to the proper explanation of these facts there may be a difference of opinion, but it would seem as if the *facts themselves* were sufficiently evident.

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The desire for the pleasurable consciousness of superior excellence, of which consciousness the emotion of power referred to above forms the principal element, takes a peculiar method of satisfying itself when it impels to what is called the pursuit of posthumous fame. We cannot believe that the approbation and praise of others would ever be sought if it did not add almost infinitely to the pleasing sense of our own merits. But especially when the desire for praise, that is to say for a confirmation of one's own opinion of himself by the testimony of others, meets with nothing but the indifference of unappreciative contemporaries, certain persons of peculiar temperament can obtain the satisfaction they seek equally well by picturing themselves as the recipients of the applause of future ages. All they require is a firm conviction that in time it must come, and the thought of it is as sweet music to their ears, as to the actor or orator are the bravos of an enthusiastic audience, or to the lonely thinker the few words of appreciation and encouragement whispered by a friend. And where this belief can only thrive in so far as it is based in some form or other upon actual performance, there you will see the man not merely dreaming of posthumous fame but also toiling to earn it.

If the preceding analyses have been correct, and if all other analogous phenomena can be treated in the same way, then our position that the object of desire is always pleasure (or freedom from pain) may be considered as established, and the idea of good being correlative with desire, it will appear that all that is good is such in virtue of its pleasure giving quality, and to the abstract term "highest good" will correspond the formula, "greatest attainable amount of pleasure in general". What particular forms of pleasure are preferred,

when we turn from the abstractions of thought to the concrete realities of life, will of course vary from individual to individual; but it is making our own more or less accidental preferences a universal norm when, instead of recognizing in pleasure in general the highest good, we treat as such some particular form of it that happens to appeal most strongly to our individual taste, as fame, power, or learning.

Does this view involve an acceptance of the psychology of Benthamism as formulated in the classic words: "On the occasion of every act he exercises, every human being is led to pursue that line of conduct which, according to his view of the case, taken by him at the moment, will be in the highest degree contributory to his own greatest happiness?"<sup>1</sup> Far from it, for all that we have attempted is to show by a careful examination of typical cases that the object of desire is always the thought of pleasure (or of freedom from pain); but from this it by no means follows that in making our choices we ordinarily have the abstract notion of our general happiness in mind at all. Indeed that is just the trouble; the tendency is to snap at everything that comes along, if it only looks attractive, like the fish at the fly, regardless of whether the fly is made of feathers and conceals a hook or not. All we would claim here is that the fly always takes the form of some species of pleasure, so to speak. Still less does it follow that in a conflict of desires the victory is always with the desire for the *greatest* pleasure. A number of circumstances combine to prevent this from being the case. The mere element of propinquity, as we all know to our sorrow, possesses a fatal power to

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Constitutional Code*, in Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*. p. 43.

fascinate, and moreover, often enough, the strength of will to carry out the resolution so easily formed in the solitude of one's chamber, suddenly fails when the moment comes for action. Nor are we entitled to infer that because all one's *desires* are for one form or another of happiness, therefore all one's *actions* are directed towards the attainment of the same. For desire is only one among the forces that determine the direction of human activity. Purely physical forces, without any equivalent in consciousness whatever, are the cause of perhaps the majority of our actions from birth on. Accordingly when the deliberative will seeks to take the reins of government into its hands, it finds itself confronted by a swarm of blind and factious impulses and tendencies from the dark recesses of the soul, impenetrable by the light of consciousness, which it can at best hope to keep in tolerable order, without expecting ever to be able to crush out or subdue them. Says Höffding<sup>1</sup>: "Nature gives us from the first an impetus, for we find ourselves already active at the birth of consciousness. It is only gradually that consciousness acquires an influence over the activity, whether inward or outward, and this influence never becomes complete. The spontaneous impulse to movement, the reflex movements, and the half-conscious movements, accompanied by obscure feeling, preserve a certain amount of independence, even after conscious thought has nominally taken the direction of affairs. Similarly with involuntary series of ideas and with emotions. The unconscious and involuntary plays a part, to an extent varying in the individual cases, in all conscious volition, and sometimes breaks into open revolt. Under

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<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Psychology* VII. B. 5 a. (English Translation).

this head', continues our author, "come the obscure incentives, familiar no doubt to everyone, to knock down different objects, to interrupt a serious speech, and to do other senseless and motiveless things". In this class belong too, the impulse to throw one's self from a cliff, the tendency of an unpleasant thought to return again and again into consciousness in spite of all our efforts to drive it away, and most important of all, the phenomena displayed in the workings of instinct and habit. The body is an "unruly member", and the mind is too often at war with itself to be a firm and consistent governor. And yet we must not be understood to mean that the unconscious, or half-conscious impulses invariably exercise their force in a direction contrary to that of the deliberate preferences of the mind. Indeed the significance and value of a "good disposition" and of good habits are that here the very reverse is the case. And it is to say the least doubtful whether, in default of at least some good (inborn) impulses as a reserve force, the deliberative side of our nature would ever attain a position of controlling power. But alike whether it supports or runs counter to our deliberate resolutions, the unconscious or physiological side of the will — whichever you prefer to call it — is a factor of enormous importance, and one which no theory of conduct should ever overlook.

The highest good then, is not be found by a generalization from the observed tendencies of human activity, as has been assumed ever since the days of Hobbes and Shaftesbury, by a large number of representative Utilitarians. Nor, in so far at least as it is defined as the *greatest attainable* amount of happiness, is the result reached even by a generalization from the observed workings of actual desire. In all probability

the majority of people are directly conscious of no such desire, because the corresponding idea has never occurred to them. For, as already observed, even in the stage of civilization reached to-day, the ordinary man seldom stops to consider the future or the possible, he snatches at that which he sees right before his face, without a thought of comparing the worth of what it offers with possible alternatives which do not happen to be quite so obvious. On the contrary, it is found by passing in review before our minds all the possible ends of action and selecting the class or variety which appeals to us as most satisfactory. If the attraction of this group is found upon careful examination to be due to the presence of a common element, pleasure, then happiness will be seen to be the equivalent of good, and — the axiom that the whole is greater than a part applying as well to a comparison of values as to anything else — the abstract formula for the greatest good will be made to read, "the greatest attainable amount of happiness". All that our past has contained will then be judged good or bad according to its relation to the realization of this end, while, as to the future, we resolve to attempt to bring into accord with it all that we do.

It is very important to note that whenever we adopt a method like this for determining the nature of the highest good, we make ourselves practically independent of any particular theory of the will. For the few simple postulates therein involved, are so obviously true that they must find a place in every psychology. The advantage to ethics of being able to go its own way without troubling itself about the squabbles among the advocates of the various theories of volition is enormous, for this is above all others the department of psychology where confusion reigns with none to molest it or

make it afraid. In two articles by Külpe on "die Lehre vom Willen in der neueren Psychologie", published in vol. V of the *Philosophische Studien*, fourteen different theories are offered to the choice of a discriminating public, and even then the bill-of-fare is not as complete as it might have been had the writer been a little better acquainted with English thought. A theory of ethics then, that begins by using any one of these systems as a foundation, not merely renders itself liable to the loss of the support of many who might otherwise be attracted to it, but what is a far more serious matter, is building on the sand, every trace of which may be carried away by the floods of scientific criticism at any time.

So much for the relation between psychology and ethics, when the latter is looked upon as a theory of the highest good. But our conception of this relation will be exhibited in a very striking light, and at the same time the validity of our particular formulation of the highest good will receive unexpected confirmation, if we call attention to the fact that this latter is not even absolutely dependent upon the correctness of our theory of the general nature of desire. For so strong remain the claims of happiness to be the only satisfactory end of action, that after everything has been said and all the disputants have talked themselves out of breath, lo! forth from the opposite ranks is seen advancing the excellent Bishop Butler, the first one to lead the glorious company of the "disinterested impulses" into the arena of modern ethical discussion, admitting with all the cheerfulness in the world that "the ideas of happiness and misery . . . will, nay, if you please, ought to prevail over those of order, and beauty, and harmony, and proportion, if there should ever be, as it is impossible

there ever should be, any inconsistency between them".<sup>1</sup> And Prof. Sidgwick, whose theory of desire we have criticised in detail, arrives finally at the following conclusion: "Admitting that we have actual experience of preferences . . . of which the ultimate object is something that is not merely consciousness; it still seems to me that when (to use Butler's phrase) we 'sit down in a cool hour', we can only justify to ourselves the importance that we attach to any of these objects, by considering its conduciveness, in one way or another, to the happiness of sentient beings".<sup>2</sup> Thus those that differ most widely in their views as to the objects which men actually desire in the heat of action, in the hurry and scramble of life, are found agreeing in their conclusions as to the objects these same men would pursue if they should pause in their headlong chase, and reflect upon the circumstances that give the various possible ends of action their ultimate value. This agreement among thoughtful men it seems to us our theory of desire is alone capable of explaining, but after all, with respect to the conclusions that follow from these premises, the important thing is that the agreement is actually reached. And we believe that it would be still more general than it actually is, were it not for certain current misapprehensions with regard to this doctrine, which however, as they are considered at length by Sidgwick in the chapter of the *Methods of Ethics* just quoted (pp. 401 flg.), need not detain us longer here.

During the course of the discussion just terminated, our statement that the object of desire is always pleasure

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<sup>1</sup> *Sermons* — No. XI. *Upon the Love of our Neighbour*. Bohn Edition p. 496.

<sup>2</sup> *Methods of Ethics*. Bk. III. Ch. XIV. Sec. V. *Fourth Edition*, p. 460.



has perhaps been interpreted to mean that the object of a man's desires is always *his own* pleasure. But neither has anything we have said warranted this supposition, nor does it follow as a necessary consequence from any position we have taken, nor finally would it be in harmony with long established facts of our emotional and volitional life. There is no one who lives entirely shut up within himself, for by means of the workings of sympathy every man becomes to a greater or less degree a participant in the life of others, and even the distinction between one's own interests and those of another may disappear completely for a time from consciousness. And the workings of sympathy introduce no anomalies into the laws of the will as these would be if self were the only person existing in the world. As the result of an examination of a number of what we took to be representative phenomena, we arrived at the conclusion that the idea of our own pleasure tends to arouse the desire for its attainment. The desire was aroused, be it observed, by an *idea*, for desire must be directed towards something in the future — a period one second distant being as truly in the future as one a year away — and the future can be represented to the mind only in the form of an idea. By a similar examination we might show — if the facts were not, fortunately, at present beyond dispute — that the idea of another's pleasure tends to rouse in us the desire to see it attained. From these facts it is but a step to the following generalization: *The idea of a possible pleasure tends to arouse the desire to see it attained.* Of this law egoism, or the desire for our own happiness, and altruism, or the desire for others' happiness, are but special cases. The physicist observes (1) the stone falls towards the earth, (2) the moon falls towards the

earth, and concludes (3) material bodies have a tendency to fall towards the earth, the first link in the chain of reasoning that ends in the doctrine of universal gravitation.

We thus see that the elaborate explanations of the origin of altruism offered by the Associationalist and Evolutionist schools are as uncalled for as they are unsatisfactory. The original assumption from which some of them seem to start out, can be termed little else than naïve. When we have become familiarized with certain phenomena by having them before our eyes all our lives from childhood on, they lose the mystery they might otherwise have for us, we look upon their occurrence as perfectly natural and as needing no explanation, and consider any unusual phenomenon as satisfactorily explained when shown to be a special case of any one of them. The child sees nothing wonderful in the fall of a stone. "How could it stay up there with nothing to hold it?" For this same reason the frequency with which we are presented with the spectacle of men pursuing their own interests, makes this seem perfectly "natural" and easy to understand, and the phenomenon in question is accordingly installed in the position of a "fundamental fact", on the basis of which all else that human activity presents to our view is to be explained. Hence the marvelous displays of ingenuity on the part of many psychologists to account for the existence of altruism. It is as if Sir Isaac Newton, starting out like the child from the assumption that the fall of the stone and the apple to the ground was something "perfectly natural" and therefore "fundamental", had reasoned thus: Stones, apples, and in general all bodies resting directly or indirectly upon the surface of the earth, fall when the support is removed; the moon

falls towards the earth; therefore the moon must have at some time rested upon the surface of the earth. All he would then have had to do would have been to invent some ingenious hypothesis to give this last proposition a certain air of plausibility — and the theory of universal gravitation would have had some one else for its discoverer.

It would doubtless serve to throw a good deal of light on the position just taken if we should pause here long enough to consider the nature of the hindrances which prevent the idea, both of our own future pleasure and that of others, from exercising the influence upon the will which it might exert, and especially to show why these are so much greater in the case of altruism than of egoism,<sup>1</sup> but the subject scarcely lies within the scope of our present plan, and we hasten on to other matters.

We have been trying to disprove the widely received theory that altruism is in some way dependent upon, or an outgrowth from egoism, by showing how egoism and altruism are simply names for the two directions in which a certain psychic force is found to work<sup>2</sup>. And yet after all, however primitive in origin, and however completely developed the altruistic side of our nature may be, it is in the abstract, at least, perfectly conceivable that a man might use it purely as a means to the end of his own personal happiness. We find namely that we are created with a tendency to

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<sup>1</sup> Some good observations on this point are offered by Kroman, *Psychologie* pp. 352 and following (deutsche Uebersetzung).

<sup>2</sup> We shall however for purposes of convenience continue to speak of them as two forces.

weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice. Clearly the latter enriches life enormously, and if the occasions to rejoice are likely to be more numerous than those which will call upon me to weep, the result will evidently be a net gain. And so we find even the cool headed Paley<sup>1</sup> putting down kind affection (which cannot but involve more or less genuine self-forgetfulness) as one of the principal sources of happiness, and when Shaftesbury<sup>2</sup> and Hume<sup>3</sup> (who unlike Paley admit, or rather insist upon, with all the energy at their command, the reality of disinterested sympathy) come to consider the question, "what obligation there is to virtue, or what reason to embrace it", they find the answer given in the conduciveness of the same to the individual's own happiness. Looking at the altruistic impulses from this point of view, one would of course have to keep them under strict control to prevent them from carrying him too far, or if the chances were that they would bring him in the long run more pain than pleasure, it would be necessary to attempt to destroy them, for instance by deliberately cultivating an insensibility to the feelings of others. To be sure it is possible that even the most determined efforts in this direction would never be entirely successful (for it is by no means certain that we have anything nearly approaching absolute power over our emotional nature), but the practical question for each of us is, *shall we make the attempt?*

Now a dispassionate observer of the great spectacle

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<sup>1</sup> *Moral Philosophy* Bk. I. ch. VII.

<sup>2</sup> *Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit*. Opening words of Bk. II.

<sup>3</sup> *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Conclusion, Part II.

of life would have to admit that were the question ever put to them in this form, there are those who would answer without a moment's hesitation: Yes! Such persons would claim with Butler that "though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good, as such; yet, when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it."<sup>1</sup> For them, the final end of life would be, to get the greatest amount of happiness for self possible; *for them*, their individual happiness would be the ultimate good. Such a position is unassailable by any process of reasoning, for it is the expression of the ideals of the man, and these are the direct product of the emotional side of his nature. So long as this last remains unchanged therefore, so long is his position impregnable against attack from any quarter.

But while all this is true, we maintain that there are others in whom altruism is a force so strong that it would be impossible for them to treat it merely as a means to the end of their own happiness, to cramp its movements or to stifle its growth according as the egoistic impulse might choose to demand. The very thought of such an undertaking contemplated as a possibility would be unutterably repugnant to them (for reasons which will appear in another place), but they also know that even should they set about it they could never hope to succeed. And moreover they do not feel even in their periods of calmest reflexion the slightest temptation to make the attempt, because the one force is just as powerful and has just as strong a hold upon

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon XI: *Upon the Love of our Neighbor*, Bohn Edition p. 497.

their nature as the other. To every one of us perhaps there have come moments when we wished we were less unselfish, but surely there have been those too who at times have felt a great longing to be *more* unselfish, while, be it remarked, there is perhaps no one who has escaped the experience of periods of indisposition to any form of activity, when he wished he could be rid of all concern for himself as well as everybody else, and the thoughts of his own permanent welfare would stop troubling him, and leave him at rest. All these phenomena have the same explanation; they are the result of temporary variations in the strength of the different fundamental forces of our nature. But where they are in practical equilibrium it will be impossible for one to permanently suppress the other. Altruism then, requires no justification at the bar of egoism, as the Eighteenth Century moralists assumed, and where it exists as a real power in the soul it will never descend to plead its case in any other court than its own.

If it be asked, how many are there in whom altruism has this position of an independent force, of course no definite answer can be given, but we believe it will be found in almost every man with reference to at least one or two others. We cannot hold that the countless instances of sacrifices made by parent for child, husband for wife, friend for friend, which are the commonplaces of the moralist, can be explained as motivated solely by the impulse of selfish affection — for there is such a thing — to preserve its object. A comparatively small amount of observation will show that the facts are not of a nature to be exhaustively explained on any such hypothesis. And this granted, there is no reason for doubting the reality of a similar self-forgetting devotion to the unfortunate, to

the fatherland, or to humanity as a whole. For he in whom the spirit of altruism is so weak that he would be capable of a genuine act of self-sacrifice for no one in the world except his own child, has nevertheless "taken the great step of crossing the tremendous gulf which separates each man from the rest of the universe; and that gulf once crossed, all farther advance is a question of time and cultivation of the sympathies."<sup>1</sup> There may be but few whose sympathies are as broad as the world of feeling, but this state is evidently to be looked upon as representing the ideal limit towards which all men tend to approximate, in so far as they are not hindered by the countless (and yet essentially accidental) causes lying both within and without themselves. Could it ever be present free from all foreign admixture, genuine altruism would know no boundaries but those that are set to sentient life.

It is evident that a man animated with such a spirit would be satisfied with no end so narrow as that which found its Alpha and Omega within the limits of his own little self. But since good is the correlative of desire, ultimate good for the altruist will consist in the realization of a complex of ends, his own greatest happiness and that of others. Thus the good has not the same content for the selfish and for the unselfish. Naturally enough, for one's ultimate good is only another name for his most comprehensive ideal, and this cannot do otherwise than vary from man to man as character differs.<sup>2</sup> And what the educator and moral guide must

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Stephen, *Science of Ethics*. p. 847.

<sup>2</sup> It is evident that the word "good" is here used to signify that which satisfies a man's actual — to the exclusion of his merely potential — desires; in other words, that which *appeals to him* as a "good", not that which others can see might appeal to him as such if he were completely developed. — See above, page 11.

do is to recognize this fact as a fact, and accordingly go about his work of training or reforming by fanning to a flame the sparks of unselfishness which are to be found in every human breast. First make the tree good and the fruit will come of itself.

The relation of self to others in the ideal still remains to be considered before the theory of the good can be looked upon as completed. That the problem is not a simple one is shown by the fact that every conceivable method of combining the two elements has been exhausted in the attempt to furnish a solution. At the one extreme stands Epicurus, who simply strikes out one of the two members of the proportion, the Non-ego; at the other, Fichte, who strikes out the first, the Ego. Hear him in *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*: "Wer auch nur überhaupt an sich als Person denkt, und irgend ein Leben und Sein, und irgend einen Selbstgenuss begehrt, ausser in der Gattung und für die Gattung, der ist im Grunde und Boden, mit welchen anderweitigen guten Werken er auch seine Missgestalt zu verhüllen suche, dennoch nur ein gemeiner, kleiner, schlechter und dabei unseliger Mensch".<sup>1</sup> In regard to both positions we need only say that after the analysis that has preceded, their one-sidedness will be evident. If turning from the philosophers we ask the ordinary man for his opinion in this matter, we shall probably find him quite ready to express his complete satisfaction with anyone who lives up to the spirit of the demand of Confucius, formulated in the well-known words, "Do not that to another which thou wouldst not have done to thyself", that is to say, in the pursuit of your own ends do not interfere with those of others. Positive

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Höfding's *Ethik* VIII: 4 (deutsche Uebersetzung).



help will be expected only in the most exceptional cases, but as to what constitutes an "exceptional case", there would be little or no agreement. Far, far higher than this is the ideal set for his followers by the founder of the Christian religion: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*"; and Swedenborg attempts to outbid even this and says, "In the next world" — that is, in a state of perfection, — "we shall love our neighbor *better than ourselves*".

The first of these three last mentioned formulas will certainly fall short of that which would satisfy the man of completely developed altruism — and it is of him alone that we are treating. His desires are directed towards the happiness of his neighbor, and he will accordingly find himself impelled to work for this end as much as for any other that lies near his heart. The mere fact then, that he has never done anything to cause another actual pain will appear to him as a comparatively small matter. And while it is true that he must often refrain from giving assistance when he would, for the sake of the other's own good, this will be the only consideration that will limit his good offices.

The most important reason why the majority of men are satisfied with the consciousness that they have never done anything to positively injure another is to be found in the fact that, outside of the sphere where the affections rule, the principal force which produces any regard for the feelings of others — apart from the law — is, not altruism, but the dread of social displeasure. The infliction of an injury is immediately followed by the resentment of the sufferer, and this tends to be reflected to a greater or less extent by the other members of the community. When a man's rule of life is summed up in the words, avoid doing that

which will bring down upon yourself positive ill-will, he naturally never thinks of going beyond what this requires. If mankind happened to be as ready to distribute praise as blame, and if we were as sensitive to the former as to the latter, we should find ourselves more frequently doing that which would call forth gratitude, and our rule of life would contain a larger proportion of positive beneficence.

Of the two proposed solutions still remaining, in order to see which is the more satisfactory let us betake ourselves in imagination to Swedenborg's "next world", and inquire what would be the relation between altruism and egoism in a community, all the members of which are inspired by the former in the highest conceivable degree. Take a single member of such a community with a definite amount of the means of happiness at his command — and under this term we include not merely money and what it purchases, but also the many personal services which cost the giver time, labor, and it may be pain, or the sacrifice of ends dear to himself. Suppose, furthermore, the circumstances to be such that the services or the gift in question must all fall to the share of a single person; on what principle would he select the object of his beneficence? Obviously he will be guided by the desire to give the greatest possible amount of happiness with the means at his command; and so, recognizing the fact that one form of pleasure is of more value than another, and relief from one sort of pain more desirable than from another, because of differences in intensity and duration, he will choose the person to whom what he gives will do the most good. The other in turn will not hesitate to accept the proffered favor, if only that the wish of his would-be benefactor may be satisfied, to see his

efforts result in the production of the greatest possible amount of good; for if there is to be any such thing as giving there must be someone to receive. In only one case will B refuse to do so, namely, when he sees that A has made a mistake, and that there is someone in greater need than himself; in such a case he will have it given to this third person, as the dying Bayard refused to drink the water brought him from a long distance and at great risk, that a comrade might have it whose fever burned more fiercely than his own. But should A happen to be the one who was in the condition in question, B would thereupon restore the gift, or what is the same thing, refuse to take it in the first place. In such a community then, the practise would be, to part with all that another needed more than self and to keep and enjoy the rest; as between self and another all difference of treatment would find its ground in difference of need. That is to say, they would follow the rule, "Love thy neighbor *as thyself*."

So much as to the relation between man and man in a perfect state. Are the demands made upon our services to be allowed to grow any more severe now that we are in a world where the number of those is by no means small who would accept favors and sacrifices from us as a matter of course, to the very last extremity of our power to give? By no means, for in offering another what I need more than he, I am permitting an exercise of selfishness on his part toward myself which I would unhesitatingly condemn should I see him exhibit it toward any one else. I am at the same time contributing in no small degree towards making him habitually indolent, exacting, and self-centered. But when we consider that the production of any great degree of general welfare is conditioned upon the hearty self-forgetting

co-operation of all, we discover that altruism itself is compelled by its own principles to set itself limits, and that the formula which we unhesitatingly approve when applied to any number of others, — “Everybody to count for one, and nobody for more than one”, does not cease to hold good when applied to the relation between my neighbor and myself.

We are now in possession of an abstract formula for the relation between altruism and egoism, but when we turn to practical life, alas! it is not so much that will be demanded of us after all; for as a matter of fact, the most we can generally do is to refrain from infringing upon the happiness of others, of positive help we can give little enough. Happiness can not be passed around like cake, for in almost every case it is the product of two elements, an outer condition and a reaction upon it from within. The former we can sometimes supply, but more frequently the difficulty lies not here but in the helplessness or indifference that cannot or will not use that which lies within its reach. Health, a cheerful and contented disposition, a cultivated mind, joy in the service of others, where these are, of how little importance are outward circumstances, as soon as one is raised above a condition of actual want! These are not, indeed, the only things worth having in life, but they represent a very large share of them, and all these, as is evident, we can never *give*; at most we can but awaken others to a sense of their value, and direct them in their acquisition by our advice. And again, although there is so much poverty and suffering in the world, the broadest altruism itself forbids us to rush to the relief at every cry of distress. For most persons are of such a nature that they will depend on others rather than help themselves so long as they have any

expectation of receiving assistance from abroad. This precaution has to be specially observed in the distribution of money. So long as the average man does his share of the world's work only because he "has to", that is, because he would starve if he didn't, so long will it be impossible for the *truly* unselfish rich man to take to dispensing his wealth indiscriminately among the poor; for while human nature is as it is, it will remain true that "the happiness of all is on the whole most promoted by maintaining in adults generally (except married women), the expectation that each will be thrown on his own resources for the supply of his own wants."<sup>1</sup> Indiscriminate charity creates ten evils for the one it cures.

We see now how the case stands. For every unselfish man the highest good, or in other words his ideal, consists in the happiness of the whole race of which he is a member. And yet it is not given him to attain this end with all his efforts; its realization lies in great part in the hands of others, except perhaps in so far as his own personal happiness is concerned, and he is often forced to stand by and see things go wrong without being able to lift a finger. But let us not for this reason lose courage. "The world does move" and even now we may discover signs of the coming of the longed-for day.

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<sup>1</sup> Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics* p. 433.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *THE INTRINSIC WORTH OF CHARACTER.*

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A man who proposes to himself a problem of final ends thereby indicates the possession of a degree of self-consciousness and intelligence, which marks him at once as a member of a long-civilized and highly cultivated community. He has accordingly grown up in a society that spoke of right and wrong, virtue and vice; that praised and inculcated the one, that discouraged and held up to obliquy the other. From his earliest childhood he has been taught that there are certain things he *ought* to do, others that he *ought not* to do. Ordinarily no grounds will have been given him for this distinction between the forbidden and the allowed, that is, the duty in question has not been presented to him as part of a reasoned whole, and indeed the average man goes through life without ever gaining any very clear ideas as to the significance of morality as such, of what has given it and what enables it to hold its place in the regard of mankind, of why it is more than a mere fashion to praise and encourage it. And yet his training in the family and in society has not been in vain. A thousand invisible cords attach him to the right, of whose strength he perhaps first becomes aware when he tries to tear himself away; he feels instinctively a difference between

the noble and the base, and unless exceptionally warped by an overwhelming desire for self-indulgence, he will never allow himself to be convinced that duty is a mere meaningless word, the product of convention. Such a one would doubtless feel that he had, distinct from, and independent of anything as yet considered, a *moral nature*, whose demands must receive attention, just as well as those of his self-regarding and sympathetic impulses, before his plan of life could be looked upon as complete. He would ask himself: What is the relation of the way I feel morally bound to act, to the way I feel naturally impelled to act — for at first sight at least these terms seem to represent two entirely different things. And if the moral impulses should be sufficiently strong he will say to himself: My decisions as to what I *am* to do must be held subject to modification by what I ought to do.

Now the taking up of these moral duties into one's plan of life seems to involve peculiar difficulties — and these not merely of the will, but of the intellect also. Our egoistic and our altruistic impulses namely, directed us to guide ourselves solely by the consideration of the effects of our actions, in the one case upon our own happiness, in the other, upon that of our fellow-men. Our moral nature on the other hand seems to say — and according to many moralists does say, "When I command, pay no heed to results; fiat justitia, et pereat mundus". It is not claimed that the actions in question do not have effects, but that these must be *disregarded*.<sup>1</sup> Here is

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer does not seem to be able to comprehend this position. See *Data of Ethics* pp. 47 and following; also p. 56. And yet nothing could be more explicit than the statement of Kant that effects of every sort, whether upon one's self or upon others, have nothing to do with the moral

a case of direct conflict between the different parts of my nature, and I am inevitably driven to inquire into the meaning, the *rationale*, of these unconditional imperatives, and to investigate the nature of this "sense of moral obligation" as it is called in common speech, in order to see whether it be not some artificial or accidental growth, and whether the instinctive repugnance towards doing what people call wrong, may not turn out to be as little capable of rational justification as that against taking a harmless snake in my hand, or eating a boiled mouse. For be it observed, as far as this latter is concerned, that while this inborn repugnance is reason enough to keep me from eating mice as long as I can get beef, yet we would all consider a man very foolish who, when in a besieged city where provisions had run out, should choose to starve rather than touch vermin, and we should surely consider a man thoroughly inhuman who, given an opportunity to save his native city by eating a mouse — as was the burgomaster of Rothenburg in the Thirty Years War by drinking his famous "Meistertrunk"<sup>1</sup> — should solemnly reply: "Mus non edendus, et pereat mundus". Are the words of the Roman poet equally absurd and inhuman? Evidently we shall have to set to work to discover what makes the distinction between virtue and vice, and what are the relations of the dictates of the former to the kinds of action called forth by the other impulses of human nature. Thus we see how ethics as an art has called into existence the science of ethics.

quality of the action; wherein is contained, by implication at least, the recognition of the fact that every action does have both particular and general consequences. (See *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten. Werke. Ausgabe Hartenstein 1867. Bd. IV, S. 249*).

<sup>1</sup> See *Harper's Magazine* for Nov. 1890.



In the first place then, let us inquire how far an actual conflict can be observed between the prescriptions of the rival claimants for the rulership of our lives. And here even the most superficial investigation will show that whatever conflict may arise between the self-regarding and the moral impulses, there is practically none between these latter and the disinterested. It would indeed seem a most extraordinary coincidence that a force which avowedly guides itself purely by a consideration of the effects of actions, should direct to the same line of conduct as one that pays no attention to effects. And yet such is the case: the agreement turns out to be almost perfect, and we are face to face with one of the most striking facts of ethics, one which every moral theory is bound to explain.

It is from this point that the moralists of the Utilitarian school set out to answer the question: Wherein lies the significance or worth of virtue? They hold this approximate identity between the spheres of moral and of altruistic action is no accident, and look upon the body of moral rules sanctioned by the public opinion of to-day as the result of the experience of the race in the half instinctive, half conscious search for its highest good. These rules thus derive their highest value from their connexion with the general welfare, and from this alone, and this circumstance it is that lifts them to a plane infinitely above that upon which rests the prejudice against eating mice. And so happiness remains as the ultimate good, and the rules of morality appear as an enumeration of the sacrifices (both in doing and forbearing) which the individual must make if the broader end, the happiness of all, is to be attained. Any sacrifice beyond this, the Utilitarian holds is incapable of justification.

Against this view of the significance of virtue the group of schools collectively termed the Intuitionist, raises emphatic and sometimes indignant protest. The Utilitarians may point to the intimate relation between the content of the common conscience and the conditions of social welfare, to the indefiniteness of the former when anything more is demanded of it than a few vague rules of indeterminate application, to the changes, not to say revolutions, which its history has to show — it is all of no avail; ply the arguments as you will, they fail to make the slightest impression, until you are at length fairly driven to the conclusion that these moralists must possess a grade of intellect that places them utterly beneath the attention of a man blessed with ordinary good common sense — or else, be encased in an armor of facts capable of defying the axe of a “Coeur de Lion”.

What can it be that has enabled the Intuitionists to withstand the accumulated force of the arguments of their opponents? It is the profound conviction, whether expressly formulated or not, that after all has been said the fundamental significance of virtue can *not* be conceived to lie in its utility as a machine for grinding out happiness; that the worth of an action dictated by pure regard for the moral law, the worth of a character in which conscience is king, is to be found in itself, and is directly revealed to him who will but see. “No sooner are actions viewed”, writes Shaftesbury, “no sooner the human affections and passions discerned, than straight an inward eye distinguishes and sees the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, apart from the deformed, the foul, the odious, or the despicable”.<sup>1</sup> Effects! Results! Let its total results be null and it still compels

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<sup>1</sup> *The Moralists*. Part 3. sec. 2 p. 414 (Edition of 1782).

our homage and awakens our aspirations to be like it. The spectacle of the noble, the heroic soul wakens us from the lethargy of indifference, the dream of sensual pleasure, and sends us forth to do great deeds, to fight for truth, for justice, and for right; it strengthens us to suffer in the service of our fellow-man, or harder still to be faithful in the monotonous round of daily duties which sometimes make life little better than one long weary march through a desert. Would you feel the fascination of such a personality? Read the biography of Fichte, "Fichte, the record of whose life thrills me like a trumpet", as one has said. And is all this delusion, the product of a crazed imagination? Our inmost soul cries No! for there is a beauty and a sublimity in the perfect character which give it a worth that makes all other possessions seem poor and mean. "Serve God" says Emerson "and where you go, men shall think they walk in hallowed cathedrals." "Likeness to God" — the holy One — says Plato, and the thought has fired the enthusiasm of countless thousands of the world's heroes. Die Erhabenheit der Sittlichkeit is a phrase which Kant never wearies of repeating, and if it have no meaning the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* could never have been written outside of a mad-house. "Wir stellen uns" he says in one place "eine gewisse Erhabenheit und Würde an derjenigen Person vor, die alle ihre Pflichten erfüllt."<sup>1</sup> And this was always for him the central fact of the moral experience, and that as truly when he wrote the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* as when in the *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und*

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<sup>1</sup> *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. S. 288 (*Werke* Bd. IV.)

*Erhabenen*<sup>1</sup> he founded morality upon a Gefühl für die Schönheit und Würde der menschlichen Natur." We remember the words of Schiller in regard to merit: "Die schöne Seele hat kein anderes Verdienst als dass sie ist"; in a similar strain Kant might have said "Die schöne Seele hat keinen anderen Werth als dass sie ist."

It is then in their answer to the fundamental question, What is it that gives virtue its value? that the two great ethical schools disagree. According to the one, "Utility is the *sole* source of that high regard paid to justice, fidelity, honor, allegiance and chastity" (Hume)<sup>2</sup>; according to the other, "Der gute Wille ist nicht durch das, was er bewirkt oder ausrichtet, sondern allein durch das Wollen, d. i. an sich gut. — — — — Wenn bei seiner grössten Bestrebung dennoch nichts von ihm ausgerichtet würde, so würde er wie ein Juwel doch für sich selbst glänzen, als etwas das seinen vollen Werth in sich selbst hat" (Kant)<sup>3</sup>. And since an ethical system is ordinarily a more or less perfect mirror of its founder's inner life, we may expect to find, corresponding to these two schools of thought, two types of moral character in the world, the one in which the consciously altruistic impulse predominates, where the most powerful motive to right action is the thought of what it will contribute towards the happiness of others, the second where the predominating impulse is the aspiration born of admiration, love, or respect for a definite ideal of character. The hero of one type will die for humanity, the hero of the other, for principle. And

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<sup>1</sup> II. Abschnitt.

<sup>2</sup> *Principles of Morals* V Pt. II (The italics are in the original).

<sup>3</sup> *Grundlegung* S. 242.

since the welfare of society stands in such close relations with that of the individual, it is evident that the utterly selfish — those whom both parties agree in calling bad or immoral — will find more to appeal to them in the first mentioned theory than in the second, the language of which they are of course utterly incapable of understanding. It is interesting in this connection to note that among the first of the Greeks to observe the relation of morality to the general welfare were certain of the class called Sophists who, apparently restrained from every form of self-indulgence solely by the fear of punishment, naturally had their attention attracted to the motives which lead to its infliction, and through this to the interest of society in the maintenance of good morals. Had it not been for the exclusive absorption of Greek ethics in the problem of the value of virtue to the *individual*, this discovery might have been turned to good account and used to build up a theory such as Hume's, which by taking morality as equivalent to unselfishness would not have offended the conscience as did the bald egoism of the Sophists and of Epicureanism. As it was, however, it was reserved for the modern mind to take this step.

If then the significance of morality has always been conceived as lying in one of two qualities, either of which may be attributed to it with plausibility as long as the claims of the other for exclusive recognition are disregarded, which is the primary and fundamental one — for it is evident that each of these views contains at least a certain amount of truth — and how did the other happen to be acquired? We begin with a consideration of the answer of the Intuitionists and formulate the problem they have to face as follows: Granted that the essential worth of the virtuous character lies in itself,

how does it happen that the actions it produces are useful to society?<sup>1</sup> Now if they reason logically and avoid the inconsistency with which Kant is justly charged of introducing empirical elements into his formulation of what is given out to be an *a priori* intuition, they can only say that the happy effects of morality upon the welfare of society are a pure accident, something indeed which we may be thankful for, now we find it so, but which we would have no reason to expect in advance, and which does not follow from the essence of virtue itself. The nature of man and the conditions of his life *chance* to be such that truth, justice, respect for life etc. are in the highest degree conducive, not to say essential to his welfare; whereby of course the possibility of a different nature and different conditions is admitted in which they might be in the highest degree harmful and produce nothing but misery or lead to the dissolution of society, and yet would remain just as binding as they are now.

To this difficulty may be added another. It is a fact worth considering, namely, that a large number of thinkers, who as members of the human race must, whatever be their theories, to a greater or less degree share its moral intuitions, find in the welfare of mankind a satisfactory end of conduct, nay more, their feelings

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<sup>1</sup> This difficulty has been urged with great force by Herbert Spencer, *Data of Ethics* p. 37. It has been fairly met so far as I am aware by but one of the many Intuitionist systems, namely the modified Kantianism of Prof. Zeller. See his essay, *Ueber Begriff und Bedeutung der sittlichen Gesetze*, in *Vorträge und Abhandlungen*, 3rd Series. The criticism in the text therefore does not apply directly to him. And yet after all that is to be said for rationalistic ethics has been said, the fundamental problem remains just where it was, namely, How do reason and altruism happen to lead in the same direction?

are outraged at the idea of presuming to put forth moral judgments without treating this as the chief factor. How is this possible from an intuitionistic point of view? How do such men happen to exist? The school is ready with an answer by pointing out that benevolence has a place upon the list of duties intuitively apprehended. But the admission of benevolence to a place among rational duties involves this theory in a very serious dilemma. For either all moral duties are merely some form of benevolence or they are not. If they are — as the Utilitarian claims — no valid reason can be given for suddenly introducing at some point some other criterion than that which guides benevolence in its judgments of right and wrong in those cases which are everywhere admitted to come under its cognizance — this criterion being namely the effects of the action in question upon the happiness of some person or group of persons. But if all forms of duty cannot be included under benevolence, then morality must be in part either neutral or inimical to human welfare, and the possibility of this latter alternative can never be denied. In such a case however we have at once a conflict between benevolence and the other duty, and the question forces itself upon us, which of these two intuitions is right, and which ought we to follow? Nor is this a purely hypothetical difficulty, for instances of such a collision are by no means uncommon. Take the case of the “forced lie” for example. Here the Intuitionists, it is interesting to observe, usually give in to the demands of benevolence, although they never fail on such occasions to kick up a great dust of words, so as to hide from themselves if possible what they are really doing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an edifying specimen of reasoning in this style see Dr. Martineau's *Types of Ethical Theory*. Bk. II, p. 236. The section on Veracity.

Still there are others who like Kant find their intuitions on the subject of veracity rather tougher than those on benevolence. But however they settle it finally among themselves, one of these commands must in any case be disobeyed, and yet since both are given us by intuition, as is claimed, any instance of being told in the same breath that we ought and that we ought not to do a certain thing, cannot fail to make us suspect that a faculty which could be the source of contradictory commands like these must be in reality something quite different from what it was given out to be.

But if starting with the inner worth of virtue it is impossible to explain its utility without postulating startling coincidences and involving one's self in hopeless contradictions, let us try the experiment of beginning with this latter and seeing whether the inner worth may not appear thereupon as its natural product. And first let us note that there is nothing in this attributing value to character for its own sake which is contradictory to the position that everything is of value only as it gives pleasure or frees from pain. For on the one hand the emotions aroused in the spectator by the contemplation of a heroic deed or a noble life are as truly pleasure as is any other form of aesthetic enjoyment, on the other, the aspiration towards a high ideal of character is desire, failure in the attainment of which "den Menschen zur Selbstverachtung und inneren Abscheu verurtheilt" (Kant), while the consciousness of gradual approximation is accompanied by satisfaction and peace. It is true that some moralists would go so far as to refuse to "Selbstverachtung und innere Abscheu" the name of pain, or rather would claim that our aversion to such a state is out of all proportion to its painfulness. But as they have not as yet succeeded



in replacing by something better the ordinary definition of pain as a state of feeling which we seek to avoid, we need not allow this assertion on their part to interfere seriously with our equanimity. Moreover we can remind them that there are different sorts of pain, several of which may be so united in one state as to give a result which is at first sight unexpected. Take the two cases of being crushed to death by the walls of a falling building, and by being enfolded in the coils of a boa-constrictor. Does the infinite preference many of us would feel for the former if compelled to choose between them, supply an exception to the relation between aversion and pain? Or does he who is tempted to reply in the affirmative think that that nameless indescribable horror that comes over some persons at the mere touch of a common garden snake, is not properly denominated pain? If so, then the whole discussion is purely a matter of the use of words. A similar confusion with regard to pleasure is chargeable upon Carlyle in view of his famous dictum: "There is in man a higher than the love of happiness; he can do without happiness and in place thereof find blessedness." The Scotch thinker here goes out from the vulgar notion of happiness according to which it consists in eating good dinners and driving fast horses. For him who uses terms with precision however, blessedness is still a form of happiness, and that the purest and most intense one, a form so dear to some that they would gladly sacrifice anything to possess it.<sup>1</sup> And so it turns out, surprisingly enough,

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<sup>1</sup> See Kant, *Kr. d. prakt. Vernunft* (*Werke* Bd. V) S. 129 Anm.: "Dieses (eine selige Zukunft) ist der Ausdruck, dessen sich die Vernunft bedient, um ein von allen zufälligen Ursachen der Welt unabhängiges, vollständiges *Wohl* zu bezeichnen."

that the pursuit of an ideal of character for its own sake is essentially self-regarding. Now we see why we never could get rid of the impression that the Greek ethical systems, even in their highest flights, were at bottom an appeal to selfishness; and in his hymn in *Les Misérables* to the nun who told a deliberate falsehood to save the life of Jean Valjean, Victor Hugo is praising the triumph of a pure altruism over this form of egoism.

But for the complete solution of our problem it is necessary to show that beauty in conduct arises according to the general laws of aesthetics, its special forms being simply due to the particular field in which it displays itself. The beautiful everywhere appeals to us as such, in virtue of certain general principles. If then it can be made to appear that the conditions for their application are under any circumstances supplied by altruistic conduct, moral beauty will have found its natural explanation and its proper place in the economy of things. It is to the consideration of this problem that we now turn our attention.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### AN ANALYSIS OF MORAL BEAUTY.

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It is impossible to proceed a single step in the task of analyzing beauty of character into the elements which compose it, without awakening to the fact that the aesthetic quality of a single action or of an entire life is primarily independent of its relation to the moral ideal. Renan has spoken of the career of Caesar Borgia as "beau comme une tempête, comme un abîme."<sup>1</sup> Now a tempest and an abyss are grand or sublime rather than beautiful in the narrow sense of the word, but it is not difficult to show that both of these elements are present in the career of this man, famous for his infamy. The Italian tyrant of the Renaissance period — at least as idealized by certain historians — had a single definite end in life, the acquisition of political power. To this all the energies of body and mind were directed, to this all other considerations were invariably subordinated, ease, pleasure, private love and hatred, the call of sympathy, the thought of danger, and fear of violent death. Far above the common herd who are the sport, now of hatred, now of gratitude, now of fear, now of reckless courage, he never swerves from the path leading straight to his goal, swayed by no passion, blinded by no prejudice.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Methods of Ethics*, p. 108.

Truly human life has nothing else to show so like the course of the eternal stars.

But for complete success, other qualities than these were also required, and above all else, skill in the choice and the use of the necessary means. And so he knew when to be secret, when to be open as the day, when to temporize, when to stake everything upon a single throw; now he floated with the current and let the tide of events carry him whither it would, now he forced the stream into channels of his own making. He was deliberate in planning, but energetic in execution, and when a blow was called for it was struck with a swiftness and a precision that made it resistless. The masses he alternately drove and led, while an exquisite tact marked all his dealings with individual men. Some he attached to himself through their ambition, others, through their avarice, others, patriotism, others, personal friendship, and to each he assigned the place he was most capable of filling. At one and the same time he would be making war with one state and binding himself by the closest of ties to another, a third he was isolating by detaching it from all its allies, while in a fourth he was kindling discontent, and sowing the seeds of rebellion or civil war. The field of his activity included a score of provinces besides his own, and in and through it all he was guiding and directing everything so as to make it contribute its share towards the realization of his one grand aim — the possession of political power.

It is of course utterly immaterial for my purpose whether all the qualities here enumerated ever met in a single man or not, the question is whether or no the contemplation of such a type is capable of arousing the aesthetic emotions. If we agree that it is, we are ready for the problem, to what cause or causes this effect is due.

At the very outset it will perhaps have to be admitted, that notwithstanding the number of explorers who have devoted themselves to the field of aesthetics, it still contains as many dark spots as the map of Central Africa. And yet one fact at least can be looked upon as firmly established by modern research, namely that (as Bain puts it) "the source of beauty is not to be sought in any single quality, but in a circle of effects."<sup>1</sup> True, a negative statement of this kind may be incapable of *proof* in the strict sense of the term, but at any rate we may feel reasonably sure that, as the writer just quoted remarks in another place, "had there been such (a quality) we should have known it in the course of two thousand years".<sup>2</sup> It is in fact with the word beauty as with philosophy or religion; it may be conceived to have had originally a comparatively definite concrete signification; from this a second meaning was derived, in virtue of some more or less close analogy with the original one; from the second, a third and so on. Whether by the time the word has come to cover four or five groups of phenomena, number five retains much more than the traces of an analogy with number one, is evidently a matter of chance. In each of the cases above mentioned we hold it does not, and we accordingly regard it as a mere waste of ingenuity to try to concoct a definition either of beauty or of philosophy that will cover, in the second case all that ever has been, and in the first, all that is included under this term. Indeed it would be the merest child's play to show that all the formal definitions of beauty ever proposed, fail to hold for important groups which the usage of language — where, if in no other place, "whatever is, is right" — persists in including under

<sup>1</sup> *Mental and Moral Science* p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> *Emotions and Will. The Emotions* ch. XIV. 4.

the beautiful. We know in fact of but one quality common to all forms of aesthetic enjoyment, namely "disinterestedness", that is to say, the pleasure imparted by the object is not due to the discovery of its fitness as a means to some ulterior selfish end, or to its ability to satisfy some previously existent desire. With this is closely connected its "universality", a term used to indicate the fact that the manner of enjoying is such that there is nothing to prevent its being shared by an indefinite number. But even these characteristics are nothing peculiar to this class of feelings, they apply equally well to the pleasure derived from odors, from the touch of smooth and soft objects, from the sense of rapid motion, and many others, so that they cannot be taken up into a definition of beauty. To the objection of Lotze that "it is incompatible with the worth of beauty to be the effect, now of this condition, now of that,"<sup>1</sup> the answer is simple enough. If, namely, upon an examination of the *facts* it should turn out that beauty is the effect, now of this condition, now of that, then we shall have to conclude that this state of things is *not* incompatible with its worth or dignity, after all. Such facts even the narrow field we have chosen will supply in abundance, and the evidence we might adduce in support of our position is therefore left to appear in the course of our investigation; but we believe that taken in its entirety, it will be sufficiently convincing to amount to as near a proof as the inductive method is capable of supplying. Were we writing a general treatise on aesthetics, it would be an interesting task to amplify all these statements and to justify them in detail, but this is the less necessary as all that is essential

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<sup>1</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik.* 3. Cap. S. 17.

here has already been said by Fechner<sup>1</sup> and Bain<sup>2</sup>. Leaving then for the present the question of the unity of beauty, we propose to take conduct as one might take painting or poetry, and after inquiring what particular forms of beauty here present themselves, to investigate the conditions to which each of them owes its origin. We begin with the treatment of conduct in general, without special reference to its moral or immoral qualities.

"Beautiful as a tempest, as an abyss!" exclaims Renan, fascinated, carried away by the career of Caesar Borgia. Beautiful, he must however mean, as has already been observed, in the wider sense according to which it includes the sublime. As the tempest ravages and destroys, so he may have been thinking of the ruin and desolation which that career left behind it wherever it passed, for scenes such as these have the power to subdue the spectator, and fill him with a kind of awe akin to the emotion of sublimity. But as the condition of all power over others is control of self, we preferred to call attention, in enumerating the aesthetic elements of the character of the ideal tyrant, to his strength and fixity of purpose, to his indomitable will which crushed all opposition from within as well as from without. However, whether we look at the man himself or at what he did, the point to be observed is that it is in each case the same quality which appeals to us as sublime, and this is transcendent power.

Whether in this one word is locked up the entire secret of the origin of this emotion, as Lotze maintains<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> *Vorschule der Aesthetik*. 2 Bde. Leipzig 1876.

<sup>2</sup> *The Emotions* ch. XIV; also *Mental and Moral Science*. Bk. III. Ch. XIII.

<sup>3</sup> *Geschichte d. Aesthetik in Deutschland*. S. 329, und *Vorlesungen über d. Aesthetik*. S. 28.

or whether along with the sublimity of power we must count one of extension, as is claimed by Kant<sup>1</sup>, and in a somewhat different sense, Bain<sup>2</sup>, is a question which need not detain us here, as the mere recognition of the existence of the former is all that our purpose requires. On the other hand it may be of value to call attention to the fact that the sublime affects different persons in entirely different ways. Bain finds it acts "by elating the mind with a *borrowed* sentiment of power . . . The great effects produced in the world are compared in our minds with effects of ours, and we transfer to ourselves, in some vague fashion, a sense of the mighty agency that is supposed to be at work. This gives birth to a pleasurable elation of the kind arising from power".<sup>3</sup> By making inquiries among his friends the writer has discovered that this description holds for a large number of persons. But there are others in whom it takes the form of a contemplation of power, if we may be allowed the term, as of something outside of themselves. Here the emotion is that of wonder and awe, combined with a gentle feeling of melancholy at the thought of the impotence and insignificance of all that is human. In so far as this latter element is concerned, the effect is thus the direct opposite of that described by Bain. It finds expression in the words of the Psalmist: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" In some cases, this sense of insignificance is replaced or crowded out by a feeling of oppression in the presence of the might displayed, as

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<sup>1</sup> *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. Par. 24. S. 234. Bd. V.

<sup>2</sup> *Emotions and Will*. p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *Emotions and Will*. pp. 237—8.



if one were but a toy that might be crushed any minute in its gigantic hands. The writer knows of a young lady who was so overwhelmed upon her first sight of the ocean, that she was compelled to turn away and hide her face. And this remained its effect upon her during the course of an entire trip across the Atlantic.

With the discovery of these facts must disappear the dogmatism about the workings of the sublime, in which many writers on aesthetics indulge, while their oftentimes contradictory descriptions find here their easy explanation. These simply represent in each instance peculiarities of their own personal experience. It is thus perhaps that we must look upon Kant's theory of the sublime. According to him, the first effect of the exhibition of the mighty forces of nature is to crush us at the thought of their power to destroy all that the senses hold most dear, wealth, health, and life itself. But in this the moment of our deepest humiliation, there arises the consciousness of the might of the spirit, the rational nature, with its *infinite* power to protect *its* interests, the integrity of the moral principles, against every attack of the forces of the natural world. The elevation of mind thus arising is the emotion of sublimity. Only we do not think of it as something purely subjective, because we unconsciously project it into the external object which *occasioned* the emotion, and thus come (improperly) to regard the object itself as sublime. However strange this theory may sound to many ears, we need not doubt, after what has been said, that it is based upon Kant's own experience, at least in the period in which he was writing (the *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, of 1766, show not a trace of it). Similarly it may be valid for Transcendentalists in general. Given the belief in a super-

sensuous faculty in the sense in which they conceive it, connecting man directly with the unseen universe, and it would be almost sure to make itself felt in some such way. But where this belief is absent, the emotion will take on a different character. And with the perception of this fact must fall to the ground any such attempt as that of Kant, in the *Critique of Judgment*, to use his own peculiar experience as a proof of the existence of the corresponding faculty. What it does prove is a *belief* in the existence of the faculty in question, but not the existence itself.

But in whatever way it may happen to affect us personally, the display of power is inextricably associated with the idea of sublimity. It may present itself in many forms, and some, as the storm, are familiar to every one, but among them all none is more fascinating than the human will. Examples of its workings are to be found not only among the high-born, the influential, the wealthy, and the wise, but in every grade of society, and the humbler walks of life and the monotonous round of daily duty can tell their stories of heroism in doing and bearing, too, many of them far more affecting than those which have had wide reaching effects or whose praises are sounded in the ears of the world.

But as when we speak of the sublime in nature the first ideas called up to our minds are apt to be vast stretches of space, or mighty forces like the storm or the earthquake that shake the solid earth to its foundation, so in like manner the favorite types of the heroic are the master minds of the race that cherish far-reaching plans, affecting for good or evil the fortunes of thousands of human beings, plans which give to the spectator an elevation of spirit not different from that arising from a view from some high mountain top;

or again, the indomitable will that carries through its purposes though man and nature unite to bar its way. Such a will may sweep all before it, with the fury of a tornado, or it may work silently and slowly, and its course be like the onward flow of a great river.

But more trying than the struggle with external forces is often the conflict within the soul. Here it is that the protest is raised when pain is welcomed for the love of others, when chances of advancing material interests are rejected in devotion to principle, when war is declared against the rebellious impulses, the impulses to indulgence in sensual pleasure or ease, the impulses of fear, of anger, of revenge, and all that is included under the impulse to sacrifice the future which looks so dim, to the present which is so real. If it only were a single mighty effort, one great act of self-sacrifice that were demanded, many a man could bring himself to do it, whatever it cost, but he is not called upon to destroy, but to control. And this is what is so hard. In the first burst of enthusiasm for a new ideal almost any man can play the hero, but to hold out, to keep up the fight against sin within, or corruption or ignorance or vice without, through frequent defeat, through hope long deferred, year in, year out, with the same enemy to face to day that was apparently crushed yesterday — this is the culmination of the sublime, for it represents the triumph over one of the most imperative needs of our nature, the need of variety, of change in interests and occupation. Sameness, monotony, this is above all else the unendurable, and the ability to stand before this foe is the supreme test of character.

Of the war that rages within, others can ordinarily detect few or no traces; we do not learn of it till afterwards and then can have it presented to us only through

the medium of descriptions; admiration and wonder then arise just as in the case of the career of Hannibal or Alexander the Great, through the spoken or written word. But there are conditions under which we seem almost to be able to behold the living power within, and these are when the man fearlessly faces or shows himself superior to some force whose workings we can see plainly displayed in the external world about us. Before the gentle sister of charity, caring for the sick in a plague-stricken city, we feel ourselves in the presence of one more awe-inspiring than the dread visitor himself. Mightier than all the fires of Vesuvius was the spirit of the Roman soldier who stood at his post at the gate of Pompeii during that fearful rain of ashes, bringing darkness and death. The storm of passion, like that of the elements, has its own grandeur, but grander still is it to behold the spirit rise, like Jesus in the boat on the sea of Galilee, and command, Peace, be still! From this same source comes the fascination of high-mindedness and of equanimity under misfortune, pain, and disappointed hopes. "Stand firm like a rock, against which though the waves batter, yet it stands unmoved, and they fall to rest at last," says Marcus Aurelius; and it is because he himself thus stood, while all about him in the great empire committed to his care, raged famine, plague, and war, in never-ending succession, that he is one of the sublimest figures in human history.

While we have more than once called attention to the fact that since the sublime is the product of the exhibition of power, the nature of the ends for which it is exerted can primarily have no direct connection with its aesthetic quality, we must restrict this, at bottom correct, and yet as thus formulated somewhat too broad statement, by the two following limitations. In the first place, the

unselfish life gives far better opportunities for a finer display than the service of self. For it requires all the conquests over temporary impulses which are demanded of rational self-love, and then it requires the conquest of self-love itself. Then it may have an entirely new class of temporary impulses to deal with, of which a pure selfishness knows nothing. For feelings like patriotism or sympathy with suffering may at times have to be controlled and confined within their proper limits, just as truly as the basest passions. Moreover the end which the egoist proposes to himself is, after all, too narrow to be a proper object of aesthetic emotion. One's little self is but a drop in the vast ocean of life, and contemplated by itself, is as insignificant as the pools which the retreating tide leaves in the sand. But the ends which the reformer or the philanthropist sets before himself attract us by their mere broadness, their approach to the infinite. Something of this quality the action of the humblest man may partake of, if they serve to contribute even in the least degree to the final triumph of the cause of humanity over indifference and selfishness.

Of all the forms of the exhibition of power, one of the most impressive is offered by the conflict of mutually opposing forces. And so it is that war, despite its attendant horrors, can boast of a glory all its own, for in the crash of contending armies is displayed a power which is never beheld without inspiring awe. And yet, strangely enough as it would seem, this does not invariably impress us in the same degree. All that is strictly speaking required for a fine battle is that both parties fight well, and yet the continued struggles of the Greek states among themselves, originating in petty jealousy or the desire for a few more acres of land,

leave us comparatively unmoved, while the spectacle of Marathon or Salamis, where Greece defended its honor and its freedom against a proud foreign invader, where civilization and culture met and rolled back the tide of barbarism, this is grand, this inspires us with enthusiasm. The recital of the story of Marathon, we say, fills us with enthusiasm, and yet we follow the ever victorious career of an Attila with a cold sort of wonder, and are conscious of being able to rise to genuine admiration only by a distinct effort. Wherein is to be found the cause for this difference? Evidently the fact that all our sympathies are enlisted against this terrible "Scourge of God", who ever destroyed and never built up, makes it impossible to read of his career of conquest with anything but emotions of sorrow and pain, and these leave no room for the pleasure we might otherwise feel in watching the display of such wonderful power wielded by a single man. In the case first mentioned, on the other hand, our utter indifference as to the outcome, whichever way it may go, indisposes us to make the necessary efforts to paint a mental picture of the events vivid enough to move us deeply, and the only feelings aroused are, on the one hand, sorrow at the loss and suffering each of the combatants is inflicting on his opponent, on the other hand, mingled sorrow, contempt, and disgust, at the thought of the at once selfish and short-sighted policy pursued by those upon whom, in a certain sense, progress and even the existence of civilization itself depend. But when every sympathy of our nature is enlisted on the side of the victors, when we feel with them in some sort the shock of battle, the agony of uncertainty, the thrill of assured victory, then elevation of spirits at the spectacle of glorious deeds and joy in the success of those that

performed them unite to form an emotion perhaps the strongest of all those of which we shall have to treat. The same law holds good when we turn to view the conflict of motives within the soul. Here again we may be, as before, either perfectly indifferent as to the outcome, or our sympathies may be with the weaker party, or finally we may take sides with the victor. When a cool calculating selfishness succeeds in crushing the generous promptings of our common humanity to lend a helping hand to a neighbor in distress, the chill that comes over us at the sight blinds us to the fact that here may have been displayed a high degree of will power. The figure of St. Simon Stylites perched upon his pillar in the desert is viewed with more or less indifference mingled with contempt (for supposed want of mental balance), asceticism for its own sake having ceased to be an end that appeals to us. And yet we do not refuse him *all* admiration either. But unconditional enthusiasm is reserved for some such spectacle as that of the Dutch boy, holding his hand against the hole in the dyke for two days and two nights in cold and storm, in order to prevent an inundation. The general law will thus appear to be: Where the obstacles to be overcome remain the same, the pleasure in contemplating the display of will power varies directly as our interest in the attainment of the ends for which it is exerted. Thus while it is a fine thing to see a man leave the comforts of his home to undertake some task beset with difficulties and hardships, at the call of his personal interests, it is still more inspiring to see him make the same sacrifices at the call of his country or of humanity. Here is the second of the restrictions to our previous statement that the ends in whose service power is displayed have nothing to do with its aesthetic quality. The first was found to be

involved in the very nature of an action arising from and terminating in the narrow circle of interests of a single individual. The second has just been discovered in the circumstance that the proper aesthetic emotion is united with and then modified in various ways by our interest in the ends at stake in each instance. Still a third will be added later, which will conclude our enumeration of the causes which differentiate moral sublimity from sublimity of action in general.

Because the exercise of power — as an overcoming of resistance — ordinarily involves pain, the sublime has become associated with a feeling of melancholy. It is partly for this reason that — for some persons at least — the warm cheerful light of the sun must have yielded to the twilight, the pale moonlight, or even to darkness itself, before the ocean or the mountain wraps itself in the garment of true sublimity. To this same, almost inevitable, association is due the “worship of Sorrow”, the feeling that pain is in itself nobler than pleasure, whence the antithesis involved in the command, “Love not pleasure, love God”. And truly he who, following Carlyle, consciously or unconsciously places the final end of life in serving as an object of aesthetic emotion to others and to self, could wish nothing worse for himself or those he loves than happiness and success, which offer comparatively so little opportunity for exhibiting the wonderful power of the human will, both in doing and above all in bearing. What we are to think of the end itself we shall inquire in another place.

The heightened effect due to uncertain lights in nature calls our attention to another important auxiliary of the sublime, namely mystery. It is indeed a general canon of art to leave something for the imagination, but this principle is especially necessary in this sphere.



The mind is quick to paint the terrible and the awful wherever it finds an empty canvas, and beyond the felt and the seen, the imagination loves to picture to itself a still grander unseen. And so behind that veil of darkness that no eye can pierce nor hand grasp, the veil which separates the known from the unknowable, the transcendentalist places a realm of pure reason, the true home of the soul, from which it has descended for a time into the prison house of the senses, bringing with it however a single spark of that fire in whose full glory it once dwelt. This spark is at once light and power, and this it is that renders man superior to the powers of this world, pleasure and pain. The modern psychologist, who holds to the unity of consciousness, not in words merely, but in reality, finds difficulty in accepting this view, which would involve a dividing up of the mind into compartments like a European railroad carriage, labelled respectively first, second, and third class. But when he turns and asks for the evidence of the objective reality of these visions, he is invariably met with the answer, in one form or another, take them away, and virtue loses its *infinite* significance. In these days when there seems to be a general tendency once more to follow the example of Kant in building up metaphysics upon the foundation of the moral experience, it is of the first importance to perceive clearly the error contained in the fundamental premise. Let it be granted that the exhibition of the power of the will loses something of its fascination when we cease to regard it as the power of a special unique faculty called "reason", with all the undefinable ideas this word brings with it, and when we look upon the will of the moral hero as precisely the same force which enables the most atrocious criminal to put through his worst plans, only used for different

ends, let this be admitted, I say, and even then nothing has been proved. For such flights of the imagination must *in their very nature and whether they have objective validity or not*, lend an added grandeur to the display — whose amount, be it observed, will vary enormously with different temperaments. So that from the disappearance of this element when we close our eyes to the vision which produced it, no conclusion can be drawn as to the foundation of the latter in objective reality.

It may be of interest as well as value to conclude our study of the phenomena of sublimity in human life by pointing out very briefly the part they play in the great system of Kant. It must never be forgotten that this system rests upon two pillars, so to speak, and not upon one alone, as some would almost seem to hold, namely the idea of obligation — the categorical imperative — on the one hand, and the idea of character — the “good will” — as the supreme good, on the other. In the writings of the philosopher, to be sure, this latter element does not receive so great a share of his attention as the former, but constant references to it as to something so familiar to the common experience as scarcely to require special treatment, and more particularly its position at the very beginning of the investigation carried on in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, as if it were a fundamental notion for all that was to follow, give us ground to suppose that it meant just as much to him in the latest period of his development as we know it did at an earlier time.

The supreme good, he tells us in the opening sentences of the *Grundlegung*, is character, or the good will. But good is something that has value; wherein consisted for him the value of character? *Not* in its fitness as a

means to the attainment of happiness, either that of the individual or of the community. It is "weit höher zu schätzen als alles was durch ihn zu Gunsten irgend einer Neigung nur immer zu Stande gebracht werden könnte. - - - - Wenn bei seiner grössten Bestrebung dennoch nichts von ihm ausgerichtet würde - - - - so würde er wie ein Juwel doch für sich selbst glänzen, als etwas, das seinen vollen Werth in sich selbst hat".<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be meant by the expression "wie ein Juwel glänzen", we may be assured it is not mere rhetoric; Kant never indulges in that dangerous amusement at critical points. To one familiar with the phenomena of beauty of character, on the one hand, and with Kant's own views in his pre-critical period, on the other, as presented in the *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, these words would most naturally suggest some aesthetic quality, and if we carefully collect and compare all the references to the nature of the "good will" scattered through this work, we shall find our opinion abundantly confirmed. More clearly than in any other place does this fact appear, where in his critique of opposing moral theories he points out what he considers the fundamental error in their conception of the significance or worth of virtue.<sup>2</sup> The theory of self-interest is, he says, the most objectionable of all, because it attributes morality to motives which rather undermine it, and "ihre ganze Erhabenheit zernichten;" while the theory of a moral sense, although for various reasons pronounced shallow, "dennoch der Sittlichkeit und ihrer Würde dadurch näher bleibt, das er der Tugend die Ehre erweist, das Wohlgefallen und die Hochschätzung für sie ihr unmittelbar zuzuschreiben, und ihr nicht gleichsam ins

<sup>1</sup> *Grundlegung* p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Grundlegung* 290, 291.

Gesicht sagt, dass es nicht ihre Schönheit, sondern nur der Vortheil sei, der uns an sie knüpfe." This aesthetic quality is specially designated as sublimity in the following passage from the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*:<sup>1</sup> Das Moralisches-Gute, aesthetisch beurtheilt, (muss) nicht sowohl schön als vielmehr erhaben vorgestellt werden."

Perhaps it may be urged against the view here advanced that it is more probable Kant started out from the idea of obligation, and having referred this to a supernatural element in human nature, thereby obtained a conception of morality which fully justified all he says about its sublimity. Our objection to such a position would be that in the first place there is no evidence this was the case when he wrote the *Beobachtungen*, and it is inconceivable he should have become blind in the mean time to what he then saw so plainly. Secondly, it is evident in every line he writes that despite all his assertions to the contrary, moral action *did* have for him an end — as all deliberate action simply must — only, according to his conception, this end did not lie in its effects upon others or in the happiness it might bring to self (as he defined happiness), but in the type of character it produced. Every other motive, he tells us, must yield to duty or respect for the moral law "weil sie (die Pflicht) die Bedingung eines an sich guten Willens ist, dessen Werth über alles geht".<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to pile up quotations here, for the state of the case is evident to everyone who has in any measure caught the spirit of the Kantian ethics.

Our view accordingly is that in this moral system two ideas meet, which had evidently occupied the philosopher's thoughts a long time, namely, obligation and beauty of

<sup>1</sup> Par. 23 *allg. Anm.*

<sup>1</sup> *Grundlegung* S. 251.

character. With the former of these we find him first occupying himself in the essay *Über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*, while to the latter is devoted the little work already referred to, written about the same time, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*. His theory, we hold, was constructed with equal reference to both these classes of phenomena, and its correct interpretation is impossible so long as either one of them is ignored.

In the sublime we have a most important source of aesthetic emotion in human action; possibly but one of the others (which will appear as the last in order of treatment) can compare with it either in impressiveness or in frequency of occurrence; however this will by no means say that any are in themselves insignificant, and in examining the phenomena to which we now turn our attention, we shall find an interesting field of exploration opening up before us.

We begin with a consideration of the effects of the exhibition of skill. Instances of it are fairly common in everyday life, and we all know what a pleasure, sometimes even fascination it is to watch the skilful mechanic or artist or chess player at his work, while inventions, ingenious scientific theories etc. derive a considerable share of their interest from the evidences they show of the skill of their originators. We have already seen (p. 51) how this quality exhibits itself in dealing with men, and in the speech of Marc Antony in the Roman Forum or in the plotting and scheming of Iago, the great dramatist has shown us how a man who knows just what notes to touch can, so to speak, play upon another or others as upon a musical instrument and bring out each time just the tones he wants. What is here done for selfish ends may on other occasions have higher

motives behind it, as when men are handled with a view to their own best interests or to making of them instruments of good to other individuals or to society. But the most fascinating exhibition of this quality is to be met with quite within the sphere of every-day life, in that consideration, namely, for the feelings of others, in that exquisite tact that knows how to tell an unpleasant but necessary truth, to warn, advise, or guide, to confer a favor or to comfort in distress, all in the most delicate, natural, and at the same time effective way, and without wounding a single susceptibility of even the most sensitive nature. Tact is the beautiful in conduct *par excellence*.

The aesthetic emotions thus aroused seem to have their origin in two sources. In the first place, skill is a form of power, namely the power of the intellect, and as such its highest manifestations, at least, partake of the nature of the sublime. And we so much admire a man who knows as if by intuition just where the sensitive points lie and from just what side to approach each person, that even the ordinary displays of this quality never fail to attract and charm.

The second of the two sources above referred to takes its rise in the capability we possess of identifying ourselves for the moment with the desires of another. Let us imagine ourselves, for instance, watching a gem engraver at his work. As he applies the delicate drill to the hard stone, it seems every instant as if he *must* make a slip, and so when, notwithstanding, line after line comes out clean cut and true, till at length the entire design stands complete before us, perfect in every detail, we become conscious that every successive stroke has been accompanied on our part by a thrill of satisfaction, due in the first instance to pleasure in his success,

and intensified by relief from the fear of his failure. It is for precisely the same reason that the term beautiful is applied to the display of consideration for the feelings of others, of refinement and of tact. The pleasure of course increases in proportion to the difficulty of the task, and reaches its maximum when to the preceding is added the element of apparent ease in execution.

Closely allied with this, is the pleasure experienced for instance in watching the workings of a complicated piece of machinery. The various motions of its different parts are so delicately adjusted to each other that each plays freely and without hindrance, and yet fits in perfectly with all the rest, contributing its share in the production of the final result. We have here a pure case of *sympathetic pleasure in the abstract fitness of means to ends* (apart, that is to say, from any special and previously existent interest in the ends themselves). A character or a series of related actions may affect us in the same way, the only difference between this and what we spoke of above as a display of skill being that in one case the entire process is seen to be dominated by a will that shows itself as guiding and controlling throughout, while in the latter the actions are thought of as the result of the free workings of a nature so perfectly balanced as to do its work of itself, independently of all external constraint.

The form of beauty we have here been considering is common to single actions and to series of events, but there is another that is a property peculiar to the latter. In such a series, namely, there must be a certain amount of variety, or else the craving for novelty is not satisfied. But at the same time there is a no less imperative demand for a unity of plan or purpose running through it all, as the formal condition of its

being grasped as a whole by the mind. In the presence of a mass of unconnected facts which it is under the necessity of taking up into itself, the intellect feels the weight of a burden which is lifted the moment some rational order among them is discovered. This discovery gives not only the negative satisfaction of relief, but also the positive pleasure of consciousness of power, in being able thus to bring order out of confusion. The scientific student feels the same emotion when he finds countless phenomena all explainable by a given hypothesis, as the theory of gravitation or the undulatory theory of light, or when as in analytical mechanics he sees a group of formulae exhibited as special cases of one more general, while a number of these in turn are carried up to a higher unity. In the case of conduct the required unity is found in the end in view, with reference to which every act is assigned its place in the plan of the whole, as a necessary means, to which in turn others subserve, and so on. But as here it plays the additional role of being the indispensable condition of successful effort (thus affording the sympathetic pleasure derived from the fitness of means to ends), and as making enormous demands upon skill and above all upon will power, particularly as exhibited in self-control, we may almost say that the conditions for the attainment of beauty of character are given in this one word, unity or consistency of purpose. Looking at life solely from the aesthetic point of view, it is certainly true that:

"Recht hat jeder eigene Charakter,  
Der übereinstimmt mit sich selbst; es giebt  
Kein andres Unrecht als den Widerspruch."<sup>1</sup>

Such a unity may be found in every perfect life, let the man's condition be high or low; and though often

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<sup>1</sup> *Wallensteins Tod*: I. Aufzug.



occurring in connexion with a total lack of principle, it is evident its highest manifestations are reserved for those lives devoted to the service of humanity, the same laws holding here that we discovered in studying the relation of morality to the sublime.

One of the most familiar examples of unity in variety is what we call symmetry. With this is often found associated in the enumeration of the sources of beauty — harmony. In order to complete this side of our investigation, it remains to be asked in how far the idea of "harmony" can be used as an explanation of beauty in conduct and character. With Plato, we remember, virtue was "health and beauty of the soul"<sup>1</sup>, while this latter presented itself to him as essentially harmony and proportion,<sup>2</sup> while Shaftesbury, the thinker who, along with his other inestimable services to ethical science, reopened men's eyes to the aesthetic element in morals, connects beauty with harmony throughout. "Beauty", he tells us, "depends on symmetry and order", or in other words, "what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable". Philosophy, or the art which discovers for us moral symmetry or harmony, is accordingly "the study of *inward* numbers and proportions",<sup>3</sup> or as he calls them in another place, "the harmony and numbers of the heart".<sup>4</sup> Have we here an explanation of the phenomena? By no means, for the question still remains, what is harmony? and this, it will appear, is impossible to define in any other way than as a complex of elements that, in virtue of the mutual relation of its parts, gives pleasure. The fundamental problem, what

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<sup>1</sup> *Republic* 444.

<sup>2</sup> *Philebos* 64 and 66.

<sup>3</sup> *Characteristics* III 181—185 (5<sup>th</sup> Ed. 1732)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* III 84.

is the nature of these relations and to what do they owe their effect, still faces us therefore, and it now appears that mere names have been substituted for explanations. The problem has merely been given another formulation and may be made to read: What constitutes a harmony in music, architecture, character etc.?

To this last question Plato gives different answers. In the *Philebos* the ideal seems to be a life in which wisdom and (pure) pleasure are mingled in proper proportions;<sup>1</sup> in the *Republic* it is the working together as one, of the rational, the spirited,<sup>2</sup> and the sensual parts of the soul. In the former case, as no norm for determining the proper proportion is proposed, we are no nearer to a solution than we were before; in the latter, what directly appealed to the philosopher was evidently the unity in diversity, but the end for which everything united to work, is again not given. What this latter was, as a matter of fact, was a beautiful life in the widest sense of the word beauty, and in the characterization of this we will find in one place or another that he, like Aristotle after him, noticed almost every one of the various elements which we have noted or shall note in this and the succeeding chapter.

In regard to Shaftesbury we can get at something more definite. It seems pretty clear that his ideal of a harmonious character was such a delicately balanced system of impulses as would in working together produce the greatest good of that larger system, humanity, of which the individual is a member.<sup>3</sup> Harmony is thus

<sup>1</sup> See 64 e.

<sup>2</sup> Translation adopted by Sidgwick, *History of Ethics* p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> This result appears from his conclusions as to what is meant by calling a passion too high or too low, a question to which he devotes the whole of Sec. III in Bk. 2 Pt. 1 of the *Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit*.

identical here with unity in variety, but it must be observed that with Shaftesbury it is presented, not as the result of conscious effort, but rather of the spontaneous play of perfectly balanced forces in a soul so happily constituted by nature that it could not be other than it is. One element of its charm therefore consisted in the display it offered of the fitness of means to ends. Shaftesbury's view, which has often been flouted as fantastic, has thus a solid foundation in the facts of the moral experience and ought never to have been lost to ethics. The impression of vagueness and unreality it leaves is due to his inability to analyze the beauty he felt so keenly and to trace out its causes, whereby he was deceived into believing that he was here in the presence of an ultimate fact. And so he contented himself with explaining it by assuming a mysterious something called an "inward eye" or an "internal sense", which as we see was simply a formula for expressing his ignorance. This "inward eye", be it remarked, perceived not merely moral, but all forms of beauty.<sup>1</sup> His feeling of helplessness before the problem of an analysis of these emotions is betrayed by his frequent use of the expression, "the I-know-not-what of Beauty".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Characteristics* II p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Characteristics* II p. 413. It is curious to observe what a short step would have brought Shaftesbury's most faithful follower, Hutcheson, to the analysis we have given of his master's ideal of beauty in character. In his *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, he resolved beauty into a combination of unity with variety. But although he, at least in this first work of his, formally identifies the "sense for beauty" with the "sense of goodness" (See Abh. II Absch. I der deutschen Uebersetzung, especially p. 118 where we read as disproof of the egoistic theory: "Wir

But there is another form of harmony which can not have failed of its effect upon the sensitive nature of these two great thinkers. Unlike the other kinds of moral beauty, it contains no elements that could form part of the character of an Antony, a Borgia, or a Terzky. We should seek for it most naturally in those who live far away from the feverish excitement of the world's great centers, where men sell their life's blood for money, power, or fame, or at least in those who living in such a world, are not of it. This type of character we shall call the idyllic, from the form of poetry especially consecrated to the work of revealing to the world its charms. The key note of the idyllic life is peace, peace with the world and with self. In such a nature there are no warring impulses to be crushed, no temptations to wrong-doing to be overcome, while anger, envy, and hatred, that make man the enemy of man, have here no place. The authority of truth and justice is owned with glad self-surrender, and in the service of others is ever found the fountain of purest and deepest joy. To such a one Duty is no stern law-giver, nor has he ever known her except as a friend.

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haben eine deutliche Vorstellung der Schönheit und Vortrefflichkeit bei den liebevollen Neigungen vernünftiger Wesen"), he makes no attempt to find the principle of unity here. The explanation seems to lie in his peculiar conception of the connexion between unity in variety and beauty; he supposed the aesthetic character of the former to be due simply to the arbitrary will of the Deity that so it should be (Ibid, Abh. I Absch. VIII). In the second place this identity of the two inner senses seems always to have been for him rather nominal than real, and in his *System of Moral Philosophy* it has disappeared altogether, although to be sure this change seems to be due, in part at least, to the influence of Butler's theory of conscience, which appeared the year after the *Inquiry*.

"There are who ask not if thine eye  
 Be on them; who in love and truth,  
 Where no misgiving is, rely  
 Upon the genial sense of youth;  
 Glad hearts! without reproach or blot  
 Who do thy work and know it not"<sup>1</sup>

This is, in part, the harmony of the Greek ideal; this is the "beautiful soul" that Schiller has described with glowing words.

We have here a type of character in some respects the direct antithesis of the heroic. The latter appears before us with his head surrounded by the halo of victory and we think of selfishness and passion grappled with and crushed; but the pain of conflict has left its mark upon his brow, and for this reason, as Schiller has pointed out, the sublime in human life always contains an unaesthetic element. But to the "beautiful soul" can fall no victor's crown, because it knows no strife. For its distinguishing characteristic is that what the hero accomplishes only at the cost of effort and pain, is for it a work of ease and joy.

Let us seek to penetrate into the secret of the peculiar attraction of the idyllic nature. Its key note, we have said, is peace. The peace of the soul with itself, with its neighbor, and with its God, means inner freedom, tranquillity, and contentment. These are what give it its charm, and above all else its infinitely restful and soothing and satisfying character. For excitement at length wearies, and the spectacle of slavery to passion fills us at once with sorrow and disgust, and strife displeases. "Der einzelne Streiter kann gefallen durch seine Stärke, durch Tapferkeit, als Held. In den poetischen Beschreibungen der Kriege wechselt unaufhörlich die Erhebung der Grösse, die sich offenbart im Kampfe,

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Ode to Duty*.

mit der Verwünschung des Verhältnisses selbst, in welches die Gepriesenen sich setzen. --- Wer (also) ohne Frage nach den Quantitäten der Kräfte, bloss das Verhältniss der streitenden Willen auffasst, der wird nicht Anstand nehmen, das Urtheil auszusprechen: der Streit misfällt.<sup>1</sup> But this is not a final unanalyzable fact as Herbart supposes. It is due to the circumstance that apart from its incidental evils, a collision of wills, since in the nature of the case but one of the parties can be successful, involves in its very essence the thought of disappointment and of failure in the attainment of what is desired. The exhibition of strength which the conflict called forth can accordingly have its pure aesthetic effect for us only in so far as we are blind to, or blind ourselves to its painful accompaniments, and thus peace justifies its claim to be not only a blessing to him who possesses it, but also a joyful and beautiful object to behold. Indeed this idyllic happiness has but to be given a dark back-ground of trouble or war to set it off by contrast, as was done with masterly skill by Goethe in his "Hermann and Dorothea", and it becomes one of the most delightful pictures the world has to show. Just such a setting, alas! has every peaceful life, for all about it in society are dissension and strife — man at war with his fellow-man and with himself.

"Es ist dem Menschen aufgegeben, eine innige Uebereinstimmung zwischen seinen beiden Naturen zu stiften, immer ein harmonirendes Ganze zu sein",<sup>2</sup> says Schiller, and we see now what he meant. He demands the harmony that consists in the absence of strife, the harmony of all the impulses, joy and the sense of freedom and ease in doing one's work in the world. And this

<sup>1</sup> Herbart, *Practische Philosophie* S. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Werke* X. 106.

remains the ideal to-day. It is not necessary to assume, with the philosopher-poet, the existence of two separate independent natures in man, the one earth-born, the other a stranger from beyond the stars; enough that the conflict takes place, let the combatants bear what name they will; and not until it has ceased has the perfection of which we are capable been attained.

The peace of which we have been speaking may come as the fruit of victory after prolonged war. But in the most characteristic instances the soul has known nothing else. Endowed at birth with a temperament that turned to the right as instinctively as a flower turns to the sun, that shrank from the touch of sin as from the defilement of pitch, that knew no distinction between the interests of self and of others, its various impulses are so finely tempered and so exquisitely adjusted to each other that their spontaneous play *is* virtue, without having to be forced into becoming it. This, as already remarked, seems to have been Shaftesbury's ideal of the harmonious character, at least he has little to say of strife, of conflict with temptation, of weariness and discouragement. It is a product of nature like the flower, which is beautiful it knows not how or why.

Such a balance of all the impulses may take on various forms, but if disregarding abstract possibilities, we look into the world and ask for the most frequent reason why it is found in certain choice spirits, while everywhere else is nought to be seen but "fightings without, and within"; if we inquire why it is that what to one person is a painful weary task, or one that taxes his power of self-control to the uttermost, costs another no appreciable amount of effort whatever, we awaken to the presence of an element which proves to be a new source of attraction in this type of character. For the

answer is, that to the latter of these two the service is one of love, and the yoke of love is easy and its burden light. We need not dwell on this at length. The important thing for us is that all displays of affection or any scene whatever that is capable of awakening in a spectator the emotion of tenderness is by general consent termed beautiful, and it is from this quality that what the world has agreed, with Schiller, to call the "beautiful soul", derives its most characteristic charm.<sup>1</sup>

For examples of this form of beauty we shall not have far to seek. Take for instance the happy playing of little children, when any circumstance chances to remind us of their dependence and helplessness in this great cold world; the display of affection itself, as among the members of a family, where the affections of the spectator are set flowing by a sort of sympathy (hence the term, "a beautiful home-life"); cases of great generosity, as in forgiving an enemy, and forbearance from self-assertion, which is a form of the same; and all forms of self-denial that call forth a burst of sympathetic gratitude (which is not merely the reflection of that of the recipient of the favor, but is due to the feeling, common to every true altruist, that a service

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term tenderness, not as the name of a single unanalyzable emotion, as does Bain (see *The Emotions and the Will* Pt. I ch. VI), but as a collective designation for all the various emotions which are accompanied by an impulse to embrace their object; these may include in different degrees pity, gratitude, joy in the intercourse with another, etc. Habitual tenderness felt for any one person may be termed affection. The sentiment of power plays a very important part here throughout, and just as an ill or weary child craves, in his feeling of weakness, to be held in our arms, so does the spectacle of helplessness or dependence tend to arouse a corresponding desire to embrace.



done to any of his fellow-men is a direct favor to him), coupled with a flow of compassion for the doer, at the thought of the pain or loss that his self-sacrifice has cost him. The lovely virtue of sincerity, which belongs in this group, appeals to us in two different ways. The discomfort of being in the company of one who may attempt to deceive us any time he chooses, is so great that its mere absence is often equivalent to a positive feeling. On the other hand the truthfulness implied in openness of heart, and the mute appeal to to our generosity, in throwing himself, so to speak, upon our mercy, touches the affections, while the innocence or childlikeness of the singleminded, exposing them as it does to all the wiles of the crafty and unprincipled, together with the joy which dwells in the souls of those whose sky has never been darkened by sad experiences of the wickedness of their fellow-men, combine to throw us into that mood of contemplative tenderness peculiar to this form of beauty.

It is evident that we have, in the examples just enumerated, an entirely different class of aesthetic emotion from that arising from the display of tact and skill, or from the perception of unity or a rational plan in diversity, or even from the absence of strife. However, the chain of reasoning which undoubtedly led to its subsumption under this term is comparatively easy to reconstruct. For, as an emotion which has for its object throughout other living beings, the fact that beauty of face and figure has so much to do with intensifying and preserving it (it is the beautiful baby upon whom are showered the kisses), makes it almost inevitable that beauty in this narrow sense should be taken to be the direct cause of love or affection, whence it seemed logical enough to conclude that whatever tends to inspire love belongs

in the category of the beautiful. Whatever may be thought of this method of reasoning, it seems to have been that actually employed, for as early as Shaftesbury we find the question asked: "Is it not beauty which first excites the sense and feeds it afterwards in the passion we call love"?<sup>1</sup> This is the cornerstone of Burke's celebrated theory. "By beauty I mean", he declares, "that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love",<sup>2</sup> while by love he properly understands (as appears by a comparison with p. 54), the sentiments of tenderness and affection". In accordance with the principle already noted that the spectacle of weakness tends to awaken this emotion, he places the most important sources of beauty, both in persons and in inanimate objects, in smallness and delicacy. From him this theory of beauty passed to Kant, where we find it assumed throughout in the *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, and traces of it are still discoverable in the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, where they stand in complete defiance to his formal creed of the unity of beauty.<sup>3</sup> Finally Schiller betrays more than once that this characteristic of the "schöne Seele" had not failed of its effect upon him. Let us hear what he says in one place.<sup>4</sup> "Heiter und frei wird das Auge strahlen, und Empfindung wird in demselben glänzen. Von der Sanftmuth des Herzens wird der Mund eine Grazie erhalten, die keine Verstellung

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<sup>1</sup> *Characteristics* II p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> *Sublime and Beautiful* p. 138 (Ed. of 1792).

<sup>3</sup> See the section *Allgemeine Anmerkung zur Exposition der aesthetischen reflektirenden Urtheile*. "Der Affekt der schmelzenden Art hat nichts Edles an sich, kann aber zum Schönen der Sinnesart gezählt werden" etc. Par. 29 allg. Anm.

<sup>4</sup> *Ueber Anmuth und Würde*. Werke X. S. 104.

erkünsteln kann . . . . Musik wird die Stimme sein, und mit dem reinen Strom ihrer Modulation das Herz bewegen". Let the poet explain to himself the fascination of these qualities as he will, it is easy for us to see that they derive their entire charm from the circumstance that they have become for us through association the symbol of that which we never fail to look upon with delight, a happy and affectionate heart. And this is the reason that while "die (architektonische oder formale) Schönheit hat Anbeter, Liebhaber hat nur die Grazie."

Thus did at least certain forms of tenderness come to be counted among the aesthetic emotions. Of all the varieties of beauty this is the most common and most impressive, with the possible exception of the display of power. Certain limitations are placed to its effectiveness however, which it may be of interest to note. The life of calm undisturbed peacefulness, namely, may finally come to weary us with its monotony unless it is one occupied constantly with all good works. Again the affection which is its moving force must not display itself too uninterruptedly, or it runs the risk of at least appearing to degenerate into sentimentality, and thus like too much sugar, of which a certain amount is also very pleasant, producing a state of feeling not altogether unlike nausea. Finally it is not only most common in women, as was observed by Schiller and before him Kant,<sup>1</sup> it is also most in place there. From a man we demand strength, the ability to fight battles, to overcome resistance, to struggle with temptations, and where his nature is such as to present him with no obstacles we are apt to find him *flat*. For him however who for

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<sup>1</sup> *Beobachtung* etc. Dritter Abschnitt.

year after year has fought the good fight, even the most obstinate foes will at length surrender and give up the conflict; in the aged accordingly this type of character is admired, or even demanded.

In analyzing the idyllic character we have discovered two distinct aesthetic elements, its peace and its power of calling forth the flow of the affections. It now remains to consider, as we have done in all the preceding cases, the relation of each of these to the ends habitually pursued by such a character. Let us begin with the former. Peace signifying that a man is at one with himself, we might expect to find all the necessary conditions for an aesthetic effect here, equally present in any one of three cases. Firstly, under the reign of (practically) absolute unselfishness; secondly, under the reign of (practically) absolute selfishness; and thirdly, where there are no strong passions of any kind, good or bad. But this is so far from being true, that the third of these states has ordinarily no aesthetic value whatever. This fact, at first sight perhaps apparently unaccountable, throws a flood of light upon the nature of the effects of this quality upon the spectator. It is, we here discover, at most a *conditio sine qua non* of this form of beauty. Where there is strife the result is a jarring discord, where strife has given place to peace, the discord has disappeared, but the only circumstances under which this can be equivalent to a positive effect is where it is presented in contrast with the miseries and wretchedness of a soul at war with itself. Joined with other elements it sensibly heightens their effect, but alone and set off by no contrast (as in the above) it is not even capable of balancing the contempt we feel for want of individuality, that is to say, of power and unity of purpose. We accordingly turn to see how

it displays itself in the self-forgetting altruist, on the one hand, and in the ruthless destroyer of the happiness of his fellow men, on the other; for as we have just seen, it may be equally present in each of these types, though from different causes. And here we find that in the latter instance it again fails to attract us at all. For the peace in the soul of a Borgia seems like the "pax Romana", the enforced peace among sullen, restless subjects, ready to seize the sword and fly at the throat of their conquerors at any instant. It is true that the task of keeping down these rebellious impulses has become purely mechanical through habit (else we could not speak of peace), and yet we feel they still exist, bound hand and foot, and confined down in the lowest dungeons of the heart, and yet struggling to free themselves from their chains and breathing out the while "threatenings and slaughter". But in the idyllic character we know there is none of this. For here exist no evil passions, envy, cruelty, lust, or if they once grew, they have perished for lack of nourishment. Even self-denial and the enduring of pain for others become a joy through the affection that prompts them. We find ourselves here in a sphere where the harmony rests upon love, not upon conquest, where it is natural and not the result of painful effort. Here alone then can the spectacle of peace charm and delight, when it comes (in the way described above) to have a positive effect. Here too, alone, are we spared other jarring, unpleasing elements, as the unrest of desire, which keeps driving on the ambitious man as does the whip of the task-master the slave, forbidding him the repose which only contentment knows. Furthermore, the consciousness of the enmity of his fellow-men, with the accompanying fear at the thought of the possibility of ever being

thrown upon their tender mercies. "Verily" cried the prophet, "there is no peace to the wicked." He spoke the truth, there is no peace to the wicked.

Thus we find true peace only where unselfishness dwells. The same is true of the other quality of the idyllic character mentioned above, the power of calling forth the flow of the affections. This we have already seen may happen in two different ways; through the display of affection, and through such forms of self-sacrifice as arouse disinterested gratitude mingled with pity at the thought of loss or pain voluntarily born. Other means there certainly are too, but they do not concern us directly in this connexion. The display of affection on the part of one person for another tends to touch the spectator and fill him with a delightful combination of tenderness and sympathetic joy, and thus he calls the scene beautiful. Now it can not be too much insisted upon that affection is not in itself altruism, nay, may be accompanied at times by certain forms of selfishness, as sometimes the most demonstratively affectionate mother is least capable of real sacrifices for her children. But affection has an almost inevitable tendency to awaken sympathy for its object, and so if we expect the latter where we find the former, only in very rare cases will we be disappointed.

If this is true of the display of affection, much more will it hold of the self-sacrifice that arouses mingled gratitude and pity. True we may feel grateful for a kindness done to self which should have been shown to another or others (favoritism), but in a case of this kind it happens that the aesthetic emotions do not enter at all. We have already noted the fact (p. 53) that the genesis of beauty is always disinterested, and in harmony with this principle we find here that we never

think of the gratitude arising from a personal favor as in any degree aesthetic in its nature. It is only as good is done to another or others, the claims of no one else being thereby neglected — as far as we know — that the action ever appeals to us as beautiful. Thus after an examination of all its forms, we arrive at the result that in the idyllic type of character the qualities of beauty and unselfishness are (practically) invariably united. And comparing it with the other types previously studied, we find it is the only one where this intimate connexion between the two exists.

The emotional states included under the term love, frequently occur combined with those whose analysis occupied our attention in the first part of this chapter, namely admiration for power, address and tact, and unity of purpose. The same is also true of their opposite, hatred. According as the one or the other of these two possibilities may happen to be the case, we shall find ourselves gazing upon the display of power or unity through a medium now of love, now of hatred, seen through which the original qualities change their hue. To the cruel sensuous face of an Antinous we are compelled to grant a high degree of a certain kind of beauty, but the character stamped upon those features arouses a dislike and an aversion that jars upon us and all but destroys the aesthetic effect. In the Sophocles, on the other hand, there is not a single feature that does not attract us, and we can scarcely refrain from bowing down in reverence before this grand figure of a perfect man. And since in all these cases our love and hatred for a character are determined by its attitude towards the welfare of our fellow men (as explained above, in the paragraphs immediately preceding), we have here a third exception to, or rather limitation of the

principle laid down at the very beginning of this chapter, that certain qualities afford aesthetic enjoyment independently of the ends for which they are used. This limitation differs from the second (p. 62.) in that there the modifying element was sympathetic pleasure or pain in another's success, while here it is love or hatred for the person himself. This love outlives failure, and hence our feelings are not less deeply moved at the story of Thermopylae than at that of Marathon, though as is evident, the complex emotion does not contain quite the same elements in each case.

If we accept the view that all wrong doing is some form of selfishness and that morality always involves unselfishness — a doctrine, be it remarked, by no means peculiar to Utilitarianism — we are at length in a position to estimate the proportion of truth and error in the statement of Martineau<sup>1</sup> that “the beauty of conduct is conditioned on its rightness”. This we have found is absolutely true of but one variety — that which we called the idyllic. All the other kinds may be displayed alike in the most shocking crimes and in the highest examples of devotion to others. In actual life however, these morally indifferent elements are often, if not ordinarily, accompanied by others, and these latter so modify the original effect as in certain instances almost to transform its entire character. But it must not be supposed that the extent of this influence is a fixed quantity. On the contrary it varies from person to person, not arbitrarily, but according to the following conditions: (1) according to the intensity of a man's altruism. To illustrate by a simple example, it is clear that a man indifferent to the sight of human suffering

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<sup>1</sup> *Types of Ethical Theory* II: 307.



could enjoy the display of strength and skill at a gladiatorial show, which for one more sensitive would be unendurable. On the other hand, a man without broad human interests would see no more in the Graeco-Persian wars than in the street fights of a mediaeval town, except for the numbers engaged. (2) The total effect will vary according to the ability to turn the attention from the unpleasant features of a picture, and at the same time to enjoy the rest. As the actor Booth was watching the destruction by fire of his new theatre, just built at great expense, he is said to have turned to a friend and exclaimed: "Is not that a magnificent sight!" Such a one could discover beauty where to another it would be hidden by the horrors that attended it. Taking all that has been said into consideration, it is easy to see how a moralist of broad sympathies and sincere love for his fellow-men could make the mistake of supposing that in the sphere of conduct, beauty is to be found only in company with virtue. This opinion seems to have been shared by a large number of thinkers, and of the most impressive displays of beauty it will ever remain true. But put in the broad way in which Martineau states it, it certainly represents a serious error.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

### *AN EXAMINATION OF THE AESTHETIC METHOD OF ETHICS.*

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If the analyses just brought to a conclusion be correct, we are now in a position to understand the genesis of beauty of character. In the pursuit of the various ends towards which instinct and conscious desire impel him, means of livelihood, pleasure, distinction, etc. man exhibits certain qualities, as power, skill, and unity of purpose, which appeal to the spectator as aesthetic. Let him make the interests of others his own, and the display becomes still more impressive and inspiring, while under assignable circumstances there appear the new elements of peace and the power of arousing contemplative affection. On such a theory, the connexion between beauty and universal utility presents no mysteries. In the first place, room is left for the express recognition of the fact that on the one hand not all the conduct useful to society is beautiful, and on the other, that much that is beautiful is harmful in the highest degree. Good every-day honesty, justice, and obedience to law have ordinarily little, perhaps no aesthetic value, though they may carry the germs of beauty within them. It is in general only in their more exceptional displays that devotion to principle, peace, and the self-sacrifice born of affection specially attract and impress us. While,

as we have seen, under given conditions almost every form of crime can boast of the very same effects. Secondly, in cases where these two qualities coexist, it is seen how the activities called into play by the practical problems of life have simply supplied the conditions for the application of the general laws of aesthetics. The moralist, as he looks out upon the world of humanity, is like the traveller viewing from some hill-top a cultivated landscape. Before his eyes stretch meadows fields and orchards, each rich with its own peculiar fruit, while here and there, through the dark green of the foliage, peer the red tiles of the village houses, clustered about their modest church tower. The sun shines, the trees sway gently in the wind, the reapers sing. Whence, we ask ourselves, this scene with all its possibilities of delight for a cultured mind? As it lies there spread out before us it represents the toil and skill perhaps of generations. Is it primarily the product of a love of beauty? Or is not this latter quality rather the crown of perfection, set by a kindly order of things upon the brow of labor, victorious in the struggle with nature for the means of subsistence?

In this instance the question we have put admits of but a single answer, and yet place two men of entirely different temperaments before such a scene, and it is evident that one of them — the more refined and sensitive nature perhaps — might be impressed almost exclusively by its aesthetic aspect, the other — of a more practical turn of mind — by its relation to the supply of mankind's daily needs. Remembering that in the world of moral activity the beginnings of things are not so easy to determine as in the sphere from which we have taken our illustration, it will be seen it was almost inevitable that these same temperaments should have given rise

to the two great rival ethical theories, the aesthetic and the Utilitarian. That each party should start out from the point which lay nearest to him is only proper; the trouble however has been — and the criticism is of general application — that each has obstinately insisted that what appealed to him in person most strongly, must be the fundamental fact of the universal moral experience. In such a state of things the result is bound to be a dead-lock, unless both parties are equal to the effort of rising and going outside of their own little selves, and making such an examination of the entire field as will settle the question whether their initial principle is capable of explaining all the phenomena or not. And until they have done so, they are bound to regard it purely in the light of a hypothesis.

It has been the object of the preceding chapter to show how naturally the facts arrange themselves when we make utility the foundation of the moral edifice. On the other hand, some of the difficulties that meet us when we attempt to begin at the other end have already been noted (see above, Ch. II p. 44 flg.). But we are now in a position to throw a flood of new light upon them and accordingly return to them in this place. The fundamental problem for the aesthetic moralist still remains: If the primary product of the moral forces of man is a beautiful character, how does it happen to be at the same time useful? So far as I am aware no member of this school has ever faced this question squarely, with the exception of Schiller; and he was compelled to admit himself unable to answer it, that is to say, he referred the coincidence to a *pre-established harmony*. He says: "Beide Weltordnungen, die physische, worin Kräfte, und die moralische, worin Gesetze regieren, (sind) so genau auf einander berechnet und so innig mit

einander verwebt, dass Handlungen, die ihrer Form nach moralisch zweckmässig sind, durch ihren Inhalt zugleich eine physische Zweckmässigkeit in sich schliessen . . . . Die Ordnung der Natur ist also von der Sittlichkeit unserer Gesinnungen abhängig gemacht, und wir können gegen die moralische Welt nicht verstossen ohne zugleich in der physischen eine Verwirrung anzurichten."<sup>1</sup> With regard to the dragging in of any such hypothesis as that of a pre-established harmony, we need only remark that it constitutes such a violation of the methodological law: *Principia praeter necessitatem non sunt multiplicanda*, that it can only be permissible when all other conceivable means of explanation have failed.

But there is still another difficulty in the way of a theory that makes the aesthetic element the central fact of the moral experience — one of which perhaps the Nineteenth Century is the first to become distinctly conscious. The Greek ideal of self-culture — mental and moral — as an end in itself, after having lain forgotten for ages, was re-discovered and again held up to the European world as the guide of life by Petrarch, and it is more for this than for any other one thing that he is entitled to the name of the first of the moderns. The presence of this ideal in him was accompanied by, or was the result of numerous qualities more or less new to his contemporaries, of which but one however concerns us here, namely the ability to derive the most intense satisfaction, not to say joy, from the contemplation of self, one's virtues and excellencies of body, mind, and heart. Whether exaggerated till its victim became a ridiculous caricature, as in Julius Caesar Scaliger, or modified by a profound view of life and

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<sup>1</sup> *Ueber den Nutzen aesthetischer Sitten. Werke: X. S. 423.*

duty, as in Michael Angelo, this element was ever present in one form or another in all true children of the Renaissance, and it still existed apparently in full vigor as late as the middle of the last century. A characteristic example of the form it had taken at this period is offered us by the moralist Hutcheson. He has just been describing the various forms of enjoyment, and now reaches that attendant upon the performance of duty. "How much inferior are the highest sensual pleasures, or even those of the imagination, or speculative knowledge, to the stable joy of conscious goodness of heart; and to that high approbation one feels of himself in any important office for the good of his country, or his friend; and to the joyful thought of meriting well of mankind, and deserving their applauses!"<sup>1</sup> One such quotation is as good as a dozen and makes us aware as we read it, that we have been born into an entirely different atmosphere from that in which this estimable gentleman lived. To be sure we still pride ourselves enough upon bodily and mental endowments, and it is noteworthy that a spot upon our character can cause us the most intense pain and make us load ourselves with self-reproaches. But the ability to gaze upon our own superior moral excellencies with all the calm self-complacency with which a Beau Brummel might contemplate the beauties of his attire in the glass, this is gone, and we instinctively shrink back at the very idea of making an attempt in this direction. It is in vain that you urge that the Nineteenth Century is introspective and analytic. The introspection of to-day is due either to a pessimistic sentimentalism in search of an object to weep over and coddle, or to a scientific

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<sup>1</sup> *System of Moral Philosophy* Vol. I p. 182.

curiosity which can leave no field unexplored, — not to the desire for the joy of basking in the sunshine of one's own virtue. And what a man can not do without repugnance himself, must inevitably meet with his disapproval when discovered in others. So that although beauty of character is often the result of effort (e. g. self-control), this must be put forth for some end other than the beauty itself. This latter must at least appear as a natural product, a flower springing up of itself, for in no other department of art does a suggestion of straining after effect play worse havoc. Especially is this true of the idyllic type where we demand absolute want of self-consciousness, or childlikeness, and the more active forms can only attain to the highest effectiveness when in the love for another or the enthusiasm of humanity, self with its never-ending importunity has been absolutely forgotten. Above all, no posing — not even to one's self! "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it", and beauty of character must be the result of something else than the attempt to attain it.

Here again how easy the explanation of the facts for a theory which, with all its grateful recognition of the value to the practical moral life of the service of every ally, nevertheless finds in a self-forgetting altruism the fundamental ethical force. But to one who starts out from the aesthetic side, what insurmountable difficulties are presented by the task of representing virtue as the trying to hit a target which, the instant it is directly aimed at, must necessarily be missed. In this extremity the schools usually adopt the expedient the Germans call "Umtaufen". A Berlin lady, a daughter of Abraham, recently met her neighbor of the apartment below her, upon the stairs. "I suppose you think we're Jews", she said, "but we aren't; we were baptized two weeks ago" (Fact). So much for every day life. In

ethical speculation we may observe the same operation, only here the substitution of one name for another takes place but half-consciously, the aversion felt towards a certain formula and the attraction exercised by another being something almost instinctive in its nature. Let us pause long enough to study the process, taking the Kantian system as a fair example. Nothing for him was absolutely good but the good will; but in common with the rest of us, he seems to have felt, more or less dimly, that somehow this could not be gained by him who directly sought it. But where could he find a second goal, through which the first one might be reached? Not in the empirical world — a quantity of reasons, very convincing to himself, precluded the possibility of such a thought. It was here that the idea of an absolute obligation to obey the commands of reason came to help him out. If it were not for certain forces having their source deep down in the emotional side of our nature, it never would have occurred to any human being, even in his wildest dreams, to base a theory of conduct upon the fact that we are able to acquire certain kinds of knowledge independently of sense-perception. But this world of ours is passing, is often unsatisfactory — nay, for some temperaments, contemptible and vile. So this “faculty”, as it is called, is made to serve as evidence that we belong in part at least to another nobler and brighter sphere, which is then looked upon as the source of what little there is truly good in life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The entire fabric of *a priori* aesthetics and ethics is based upon the assumption that — as some one has put it — “All that is best in the world must come from somewhere outside of the world”. Cf. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (S. 259). “Alle sittliche Begriffe (haben) völlig *a priori* in der Vernunft ihren Sitz und Ursprung . . . . und in dieser Reinigkeit ihres Ursprungs (liegt) eben ihre Würde, um uns zu obersten praktischen Prinzipien zu dienen”.



Immediately thereupon the standard of revolt is raised against the world of sense, its allegiance is renounced, and we declare ourselves subjects of a power to which all that is confined within the limits of time and space is a stranger, often-times an enemy — and lo, the good will and everything else we wanted! For morality, on account of the notion of obligation therein involved, may be identified with obedience to the laws of this rational world; its fundamental principle be made to read nearly enough like the "Golden Rule" for all practical purposes, by giving to the expression of our selfish desires the form of universality, the distinguishing mark of the products of the reason; and the individual actions that go to make up a beautiful character — the point from which we started out — now appear disguised as the sum of all that is "due to the dignity of a rational being", the disgusting and the ugly, as "unworthy of a rational being". "Unworthy of a rational being!" Let us try the experiment of replacing this last term by an equivalent, in order for just once to free it from the nimbus of hidden assumptions and time-honored associations with which it is surrounded. It will then read: Unworthy of a being capable of knowing, for instance, that every event must have a cause, without having to guess it out with the aid of inferences drawn from observation and experience. Formulated in this way, the thought somehow fails to radiate either light or heat. Evidently its power lies somewhere outside of itself; where, we have already pointed out. The objections to the actions in question are aesthetic in their nature, and the introduction of the reason is simply an attempt to strengthen the motives arising from this antipathy, by connecting them with another sphere and order of things.

Let us verify this statement by means of a few examples selected from the class known as "duties to self" (in which we do not confine ourselves exclusively to the Kantian list). We may commence by mentioning suicide, lying, flattery, hypocrisy and avarice. The direct aversion to both lying and suicide arises in reality from the fact that both disclose, each in its own way, cowardice or a want of sufficient courage to face the realities of life. The contempt for the liar is of the same nature as that of one of King Arthur's knights for the warrior who should run away in battle. Flattery and hypocrisy are the objects of dislike, partly as aggravated forms of lying, partly as involving the absence of the in itself charming quality of sincerity or frankness. The miser is despised as the dupe of an illusion, and as presenting a spectacle of abject misery is looked upon with a feeling of pain, which, with humanity as it is, is seldom tempered with a great amount of sympathy, while the absence in him of all generous qualities consciously chills the heart of the spectator. If the disgusting be admitted as a form of the ugly, the aesthetic nature of the objections to another group represented by promiscuity, drunkenness, and if we follow the list given by some writers, even filth, is apparent without the need of farther elaboration. Finally we may call attention to the setting up of love of freedom, ambition, and love of culture as moral qualities. A simple reference to the results reached in Chapter III will be sufficient to remind us that they who possess these and similar characteristics present a far more attractive, not to say inspiring spectacle than the dull clod who lives on year after year, without an idea beyond the supply of his bodily wants and the monotonous round of mechanical labor forced from him by the taskmaster,

necessity. And this is at bottom the reason why such a life is "unworthy of a rational being".

It may be of interest to compare the Kantian method of procedure with that of a typical Greek like Aristotle. As may be inferred from what has been already said, the peculiar conditions which make a thorough-going and outspoken aesthetic system almost impossible to-day, had not begun to exist for him or his contemporaries. And so he was able not merely to speak out, but — what is much more — to *think* just what he really felt. "Beauty is the goal of virtue" he tells us, "and for its sake it is that we practice the latter."<sup>1</sup> "The moral man rejoices as such in virtuous action and contemns the wrong, just as the musician rejoices in beautiful melodies and is pained at the bad".<sup>2</sup> Virtue commends itself, in a word, through its own inherent beauty, and in addition through the respect and admiration of others with which it is attended.<sup>3</sup> These represent the simple facts of the case as they appear to him, and he is utterly unconscious of any reason for covering them up. To be sure he is still too much of a Platonist to be able to refrain from treating us to an occasional dose of metaphysics (as in Bk. I: 6), but these will be found to form no organic part of the investigation and need mislead no one. Right and wrong, it is evident, will be here determined by the taste, and the judge will be the man of insight, that is to say of refined sensibilities. Why such a one would condemn cowardice, rashness, intemperance, mental sluggishness, love of display, buffoonery and the rest, is after all we have said on this subject clear enough. The man and his actions

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<sup>1</sup> *Nichomachean Ethics* III: 10 and IV: 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* IX: 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* III: 3.

are approved or disapproved, according as the emotions aroused by their contemplation are pleasant or otherwise. "Avarice is unworthy of a gentleman", if we may be allowed to put it that way, "boasting is disgusting", and "sensuality is brutish"<sup>1</sup> — which last is but another term for the second. And this we believe represents Aristotle's theory in its entirety. For we hold that his famous definition of virtue, according to which it is a mean between two extremes, can not be taken for a definition in the same sense as that for instance offered by Utilitarianism. This gives — primarily at least — not some quality found by a process of induction to be common to what men call right and absent in what they call wrong, but rather the *reason* for approving the one class and disapproving the other. Aristotle, on the other hand, finding himself in the presence of a great variety of actions which he was conscious of viewing with direct displeasure, made the discovery, as he believed, that they represented in every case the extremes of a quality which in itself was admirable. In search of some definition of virtue as he was, he accordingly used this characteristic for that purpose, scarcely even pretending to present it as a criterion, that is to say, as a universal ground of approbation. It is true that the principle, "Moderation in all things", seems to have a certain positive aesthetic flavor of its own. But in so far as this is the case, it owes its origin (apart from the will power thereby called into requisition) to the circumstance that in a great variety of instances — in one case for one reason, in another, for another — extremes are as a matter of fact offensive, disgusting, or in some of the many possible ways, displeasing.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid IV: 3; 13. III: 13.

And now the practical application of all this to the case in hand! If such a theory could appeal to any one it would be to the Greeks, with their keen aesthetic sensibilities, their sensitiveness to their appearance in the eyes of others, and their unlimited abilities in the way of self-admiration. And yet, as is well known, Aristotle's ethical system never succeeded in exerting either a wide-spread or a permanent practical influence. Various explanations have been offered for this remarkable fact. Is not the simplest just this, that an aesthetic theory of morals has only to be clearly and openly stated and presented by its true name, with no masquerading, to be its own refutation? Shaftesbury and Hutcheson united this side of their systems with altruistic, Schiller with rationalistic elements, while Herbart, the only pure example of this type of thought in modern history, is to-day almost forgotten, if we may use this term of what was practically never known outside of the dissecting-room. These facts are suggestive and worth taking to heart. They show us that the aesthetic element in morality, taken by itself, is capable of permanently satisfying the wants of our nature, above all, the demand for a solid foundation upon which to raise the structure of our lives, only in so far as we succeed in hiding from ourselves its true character, and in disguising it, by throwing about it a glamour borrowed from some other source, preferably from the supersensible world.

The circumstance that so many Intuitive moralists are unwilling to admit the essentially aesthetic nature of their ideals, makes it very difficult to subject their systems to direct criticism. But, after all, these find their condemnation in themselves, for as soon as their propounders get beyond the one fundamental principle

of the intrinsic worth of the good will, immediately every one of them strikes into a different path, and no two will be found to agree in any important respect, except possibly in their condemnation of the course chosen by number three. Of so much importance is the starting point in the intellectual sciences! And — to return to our original proposition — if it be true of beauty of character, as Dr. Holmes says of fame, that it generally comes to those who are thinking of something else, this fact alone is equivalent to the death sentence of all aesthetic moral theories.

It is perhaps clear by this time that every attempt to make beauty of character the *primary* product of the moral forces is necessarily doomed to failure. Their original goal is the general happiness, and the deepest tendencies of the moral life find their only consistent expression in what is known as the Utilitarian criterion of right and wrong. But it is possible to approach the subject from another point of view than the genetic; the question of *values* may and indeed ought to be raised. Beauty of character, such a one would urge, may have arisen in any way you like; one thing is certain, *it is here*, and now that it exists, it is the most valuable product of moral activity, and as such can not fail to be a determining factor in the formation of our ideals. The first temples, he would continue, may have been intended merely to protect the statue of the god from the elements; but was it for this that the architect of the Parthenon planned and built that wonderful work of art upon the Acropolis? And when the citizens contemplated with joy and pride this perfect product of human genius, were these feelings due to the thought that now their Athena could not get wet in the rain? We are not aware that just this line of reasoning has ever been

actually employed, but it represents very well the general objection that a large group of scholastic might bring forward to the conclusion we have drawn from our analysis of moral beauty, should they attempt to meet us on our own ground. We are now accordingly in a different field; it is no longer the theoretical question of *origin*, it is the practical question of *worth*.

Here we may perhaps be met at the very outset with the objection that if we hold to our position that beauty of character is unattainable for him who directly seeks it, any discussion of its worth compared with other things is of no practical use. In a certain sense this is true. But as our attitude on this point is confessedly determined by our private and personal taste, and this again is recognized to be due to changes in human nature that have been going on for not more than a century or two, so that for aught we know some time things may swing back again, we are not willing to let our entire argument rest upon such a basis. Besides we are compelled to admit that there are certain cases where the law laid down does not apply with absolute strictness, more especially in a few of the so-called duties to self.

We return accordingly to our question, what is the worth of beauty of character as compared with the different forms of happiness? No comparison is possible, some will answer at once, the one is *infinitely* to be preferred before the other. If this be true, we may at any rate ask for the explanation of the process by which this ratio is determined to be  $\infty : 1$ . But perhaps we can do more; perhaps it will be possible to show that as a matter of fact this ratio does *not* hold, that we do recognize the existence of some common measure. Let us select a simple example. Almost all

Intuitional systems unite in demanding the culture of the intellectual faculties as a moral duty. If they really mean what they say, it is my duty, according to their view, to make use of all possible means of getting an education, to allow no hindrances to deter me in my course, and to carry it just as far as possible (though what limit is there to the possible, except that set by the length of life and the extent of our mental abilities?). In such an attempt the sacrifices are to count for nothing, and the amount of happiness I get from it afterwards or its use to my fellow men, is not to be considered; for the worth of intellectual culture cannot be estimated by the amount of pleasure obtained through it either by myself or others. On the other hand, the Utilitarian insists upon the employment of this scale here as everywhere else. To be sure the problem is ordinarily too complex for treatment by the mathematical method, but such at any rate are the principles upon which he bases his estimate. The father always takes into consideration the amount of sacrifice he would have to make in order to give his son a higher education, and when money is at all scarce, the boy goes to work at fourteen unless he gives evidence of very exceptional talents. The state judges in the same way, and the European governments are beginning to consider means to cut down the numbers of the "Educated Proletariat", not merely because of the element of danger to society in the existence of so many discontented men in its midst, but also for the sake of the subject himself, holding with Goethe "es ist immer sein *Unglück* wenn er veranlasst wird, nach etwas zu streben, mit dem er sich durch eine regelmässige Thätigkeit nicht verbinden kann". Do the other ethical schools condemn such a position? One of the best pleas there is for just this point of view is urged



by Prof. Paulsen, from whom the quotation just cited is borrowed,<sup>1</sup> and yet he is one of those who (in abstracto) stand for the intrinsic value of all that tends to self-development. Così fan tutte — "they all do it". A man who should demand indiscriminate encouragement of universal and unlimited higher education, regardless of its cost and of its final utility either to the individual or society, would be looked upon by everyone (his Intuitional brethren included) as a ripe subject for the lunatic asylum. So it would seem as if in this instance there *were* some common measure between beauty of character and happiness, after all.

If this case does not suffice to establish our position, we may adduce another. Of all the qualities valued for their own sake, one of the most important is strength of character. It is as a revelation of this that veracity is revered. But why stop here? We all know more or less about the author of *My Religion*. Exalted moral heroism has here produced a character so grand that we of common clay may well bow down before it in reverence. But are we for this reason called upon to subscribe to what are its most characteristic modes of displaying itself, the principle of non-resistance to evil and the doctrine of the *Kreuzer Sonata*? But if the intrinsic worth of heroic self-sacrifice is out of all proportion to what it may cost, *why not*, just as well as to veracity, sincerity, and obedience to the recognized code of sexual morality? Surely the mere vulgar utility of these latter, the fact that the practice of either of the former would mean the destruction of our civilization, can be no ground before this forum in favor of the one and against the other. Or is the "et pereat mundus" after all nothing but mere rhetoric?

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ethik*, 2<sup>e</sup> Aufl. S. 454.

We commend these problems to the Intuitionalist for careful consideration. Perhaps he may find their solution in the admission that after all there is a place where sacrifices made for the sole end of gaining admired qualities of character may legitimately cease. But it is by no means absolutely necessary to decide this point categorically before going on; so we return to our question, How do we set about making a comparison of values?

Between two possible sense-pleasures the process would seem to be simple enough — we choose the one we take to be the greater. But owing to the frequent complexity of the problem thus presented for solution, this statement is often denied. This seems about like claiming that “owing to the frequent complexity of the problem”, we never attempt to make a forecast of the weather; or that for the same reason political economy declines to hazard an opinion as to the relative merits of *Laissez faire* and Paternalism, or pedagogics, as to the comparative value of Greek and a corresponding amount of the natural sciences. And, in fact, no one but a man who had a theory to defend would refuse to join with the rest of the world in condemning a person as a fool who, for one night’s pleasure, should knowingly ruin his health for the rest of his life. It is clear, then, that some sort of a comparison is actually undertaken. If so, it only remains to ask, are the principles upon which it rests capable of intelligible formulation?

Single states of pleasure in themselves considered, apart from all effects and from accidental differences (propinquity and certainty), apart also from that characteristic quality which gives them their individuality in consciousness, may be distinguished with reference to

their intensity and duration. A comparison of amounts of pleasure accordingly involves an estimate of the magnitude of each of these factors, and this presupposes the possibility of setting up a unit of measurement in each case. For duration or time, the problem presents no difficulties and has been solved to the satisfaction of the whole world. On the other hand, the construction of a scale upon which the different degrees of intensity may be referred to their proper places has been declared to be impossible. As a matter of fact however, a similar scale has been in actual use among psychologists for a great many years, and is no other than that employed in the formulation of the Weber-Fechner law. The expression "intensity of pleasure" refers to the fact that apart from duration and all other accidental qualities, states of pleasure are found to differ in respect to the degree of their power to directly attract us, so that we are conscious of immediately preferring one to the other, or liking it better, as we sometimes say. A unit of intensity may accordingly be found in the smallest difference in actual attractiveness that can be detected by consciousness between two states of feeling. The *relative intensity* of any two states of pleasure will then be in proportion to their distance (counted in the units just mentioned) from the point of indifference = 0, and their *relative value* will be as the product of these terms into their respective periods of duration.

We do not wish to have the nature of the above formula misunderstood. If I am placed before two poles and asked which is the higher, I do not have to first reckon out the length of each in feet and inches. Indeed a three year old child who had never heard of these terms might be able to answer the question as correctly as anyone else. Similarly we determine the relative

amount of two pleasures by a direct estimate. But as already observed, all quantitative comparison involves the abstract possibility of setting up some unit of measurement, and conversely the supposed absurdity involved in the very idea of a unit of intensity has often been used to demonstrate the futility of all talk about a comparison of amounts of pleasure. What we have been attempting to do is to undermine the last support of this notion by presenting the formula demanded.

It does not lie within the scope of our subject to consider the various difficulties with which we are confronted when we attempt to perform the operation whose possibility we have been discussing. As is evident it often amounts to nothing more than a rough estimate. But we may pause long enough to call attention to two circumstances that serve to increase its practical value for the guidance of life. In the first place, in proportion as the problem becomes difficult to solve (unless this be because of uncertainty as to the number of elements that enter into it), a mathematically correct solution becomes unimportant. Just as a mistake of ten cents on a bill of a hundred dollars, so the thought of a possible error in the choice of an enjoyment, where the difference either way is very small, never seriously disturbs our equanimity. Secondly, as far as pleasure at any rate is concerned, its gamut of intensities is comparatively so small that time forms the chief element in its value. The wise man will therefore devote the most care to a correct estimate of duration, which is a relatively simple operation. But this is by the way.

We have now to inquire whether there is any other element that enters into the determination of the comparative value of emotional states, besides intensity and duration. Certainly, is the reply of the representatives

of a great variety of schools; pleasures are recognized as having a *higher* or *lower* worth, which is entirely independent of any considerations of mere quantity. This is true among others of the aesthetic pleasures as compared with those of sense, and — to bring this position to bear upon our original problem — since beauty of character is one form of beauty in general, it follows that as an end of action it has a worth out of all proportion to any amount of mere happiness. Admitting at the very outset the reality of this distinction, let us ask whether it presents us with an actual exception to the general law of values formulated above, or whether it may not correspond purely to a difference in the point of view from which the estimate is made.

Of these two alternatives we consider the latter to be correct, holding that “higher” and “lower” do not represent, primarily at least, any quality of an emotion as *felt*, but rather the way the sight or thought of the emotion, or more exactly the subject in the act of enjoying the emotion, affects a spectator. Starting out with the acceptance of this view for the moment as a pure hypothesis, we believe a simple analysis will show that it is capable of explaining all the phenomena to which the supporters of the opposing theory appeal. This statement we will attempt to verify by an examination of the facts themselves.

The reader is already acquainted with the general outlines of the theory under discussion, from the writings of Mill<sup>1</sup> and before him Hutcheson<sup>2</sup>. The lower pleasures of course are those of the senses, the higher, those of the intellect (and with Hutcheson of morality), while

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<sup>1</sup> *Utilitarianism*. Ch. I.

<sup>2</sup> *System of Moral Philosophy*. Bk. I. ch. VII.

between them would come, I suppose, those of bodily activity, as athletic sports. We begin with the class first mentioned.

We note in the first place that the sight or even the idea of indulgence in certain sense pleasures, when they are carried beyond a given point, tends to strike us as disgusting. These are those of eating, to a less degree, of drinking (drunkenness aside), and of sexual intercourse. Confining ourselves to the first mentioned, we remark that the feeling in question is neither more nor less than nausea, and as it would seem is due to the suggestion of the idea of an over-loaded stomach, itself a frequent cause of the feeling. As proof of this statement, note that disgust affects us most strongly when we ourselves have just eaten, and that it is less aroused by the sight of the consumption of light foods, as ices, than by that which is heavy or above all greasy. Now it having once become customary to consider the three forms of pleasure just mentioned as the pleasures of sense *par excellence*, the feelings with which they are regarded are at once transferred to all, and the entire class accordingly appears labelled with the attribute of disgusting or low. This is a careless and unscientific proceeding, as anyone must admit, for consider in what a very large number of instances it utterly fails to apply. The enjoyment of the odor of a rose is never thought of as "low", nor that of a single bright color or agreeable sound (where there is no suspicion of an aesthetic element), nor of the touch of soft clothing, the warmth of the sunshine, or the glow of health. Furthermore this quality is never attributed to the aversion from pain of strictly sensual origin, as the tooth-ache. The case accordingly stands as follows: The thought or sight of two or three forms of enjoyment immediately connected

with sensation may under certain circumstances occasion a slight feeling of nausea. This fact has been supposed by an oversight to hold for all members of this class, and the pleasures of sense are accordingly branded as low.

Going over now to the other side, we note that self-direction (to which corresponds love of freedom), far-reaching plans for self or others (a constituent part of ambition), and aesthetic and intellectual culture, all imply the presence of an exceptional amount of mental vigor and a high grade of intellectual and will power. As we have seen in Chapter III, the spectacle of the exercise of these qualities is a direct cause of the aesthetic emotions and also of the allied feeling of respect (for power). Note particularly that this is as true of the exercise of taste as of the intellectual faculties, for it implies the same foundation of culture and the same mental activity. On the other hand, in the enjoyments of sense, the subject is mainly passive, hence not only the absence of the above emotions on the part of the spectator, but also the greater or less amount of contempt with which the former is contemplated (contempt = reaction upon the discovery of a want of power). This feeling is intensified for many persons by their acceptance of another crude generalization of the psychologists whom the Intuitionists consult, to the effect that all sense-pleasures originate in the mere satisfaction of a craving. The person indulging in them is accordingly represented as kicked about by his passions, and the absence of all self-determination is thus emphasized anew. These circumstances combined, supply a second ground for the low rank assigned to this class of feeling, apart from the thought of the disgusting. From all this we see that in general the application of the epithets high and

low to pleasures corresponds exactly to the emotions of pleasure or otherwise with which they are contemplated by the spectator.

But it will be objected that we involuntarily apply these epithets to our own pleasures, and that without having to wait till we have witnessed others engaged in indulging in them. Of course we do, in so far namely as we take the position of spectator of ourselves, either in memory or imagination, or even during the very act of enjoying if this does not fully occupy the attention. And it is because we can do this that we have a tendency to judge all feelings directly from a double point of view; and as the corresponding judgments do not always fall out alike we have coined the antithetical expressions, quantity and quality. A high quality of pleasure is one that can be looked upon or thought of with pleasure; a low quality, one that can be indulged in only at the cost of the pain of disgust or self-contempt. The worth of a high pleasure is therefore equal to the sum of these two factors, that of a low one is represented by the difference obtained by subtracting the one from the other. This latter, it is evident, may as easily turn out a negative as a positive quantity.

The terms high and low, it will now be seen, refer to the position of pleasures in what is essentially an aesthetic scale. But right here it may be urged that since the spectacle of the perception and enjoyment of beauty appears as itself beautiful, when a person becomes spectator of himself we have the possibility of a *regressus in infinitum*. This is true in the same way as it is of self-consciousness, and in no other, for this is a knowing that I know, and in the abstract this series may be extended to infinity too. In practice however



it never is carried beyond a second term, and if this should be attempted in the first case mentioned, it would probably be found that each successive emotion was so pale a reflection of the one preceding it, that it must soon become too faded to be perceptible in consciousness under any circumstances.

Recollecting, as we have already been reminded, that beauty of character has been shown to be nothing more nor less than one of the sources of the aesthetic emotion, we will find we have returned to the position of Chapter II, that its attraction for us is due to the pleasure it affords, the worth of which is not to be measured by a different scale from that which we apply to the other emotions.<sup>1</sup> There may conceivably come a point therefore where to sacrifice everything else to its attainment is folly<sup>2</sup>; while for the moralist to demand from society actions of merely aesthetic value, where these are purchasable only at the cost of a considerable amount of loss or pain, is nothing more nor less than pure selfishness. One frequently sees traces of this form of egoism in judgments of measures affecting the welfare of society. A large number of the critiques of socialism, for instance, amount to about this: The uninterrupted bliss of the year 2000 is uninteresting and flat (as an object of contemplation, namely). If this is all that can be said on the subject, such a position is as unjustifiable before the bar of altruism as that of the group of foreign dilettanti in Italy, who are complaining and protesting at the destruction of the old rookeries in Rome and Naples, reeking as they do with filth and the germs of disease, the accumulation of centuries, and are demanding their preservation, all because they are

<sup>1</sup> See above p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> See above p. 102 and flg.

*picturesque!* It is to the circumstance that he has been led astray by a too exclusive interest in this aspect of life that we may trace the rejection (in words at least) by Prof. Paulsen of the hedonistic formula for the highest good, a statement which receives abundant confirmation from almost every line of Ch. 2 of the second book of his *System der Ethik*<sup>1</sup>. But we live in a world where the service of our fellow men will always give us opportunities enough for the exhibition of the most exalted forms of heroism and the loveliest displays of affection, without the necessity of our sacrificing the happiness of any human being, our own or any one else's, to a pure love for aesthetic effect. On the other hand, as long as the demands made upon us by life continue to be as hard as they often are, enthusiasm for character will always remain one of the most important helps to right living, and it should be fanned till it burns a steady flame in the hearts of all. But it must never be forgotten that the perfect unselfishness which an absolute altruism demands is only attained when all thought of self is thrust aside, and the good deed is done solely and alone for the sake of him that needs it.

We have advanced to the problem of determining the place of beauty of character in the moral world from two different sides. First we attempted to discover what are the conditions to which it owes its origin; then we examined the principles by which its value is determined in comparison with that of other emotional states. To the conclusion we have reached by each of these two widely different methods, but one possible objection can be presented — so far as we are able to

<sup>1</sup> See especially what comes under the answer to the question, "Welche Dichtungen gefallen uns?" (S. 203 in both editions).

see. We have frequently had occasion to notice the fact that many Intuitionists (for instance Martineau) speak of love of culture, ambition, and love of freedom, as duties. How does it come about, they will now ask, that notwithstanding all your plausibilities the idea of obligation actually attaches to these emotions, the obligation, namely, to prefer them to others or to pursue the ends to which they point? We ourselves, to be sure, are far from admitting the universality of this feeling in these particular cases, which such writers attribute to it. We think that its strength and even its existence will be found here to depend mainly upon such relatively accidental circumstances as temperament and education. Still when it is said they can never make an opera pay in Paris (fashionable "crazes" excepted) unless it has a ballet, this assertion, which on the surface is nothing more than the denial of the existence of musical taste among the inhabitants of the French capital, will be felt by many to somehow involve a reflection upon the entire character of the Parisians, and would doubtless be represented as such by them themselves. But on a theory like ours, how is it possible it should ever occur to any member of the human race to say to another: You ought to train yourself to have good musical taste? The answer to this question will be found to throw such a flood of light upon so many characteristic phenomena of the moral experience that it seems to us it will repay exhaustive treatment. But it being a personal conviction of ours that the current Utilitarian treatment of the notion of duty is one of the weakest points in the system, it seems to us necessary to begin with an examination of the idea of obligation in general, in the course of which the problem as to the nature of this particular form will, we hope, find a satisfactory solution.

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE IDEA OF OBLIGATION IN AESTHETICS AND ETHICS.*

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In all the preceding pages we have been treating of morality as if it consisted in the pursuit of an ideal, and the problem we have been attempting to solve was to construct a formula for the latter which might serve as the expression, in abstract form, of all that appeals to us as a good, and at the same time be free from contradictions. But a very important objection can be and constantly is raised against this entire point of view. A man's ideals it is said — and with truth — represent, after all, nothing more than the direction of his personal and private desires. The perfect altruist may doubtless recognize in the words, "The greatest possible happiness of the greatest number", the comprehensive formula of his ideal, but in like manner the completely selfish man finds all his desires bounded by the limits of his own individual happiness. Do we then make these two statements with the same indifference with which we might say: This little girl likes to play with her dolls, while her brother will have nothing to do with them, but amuses himself with baseball? By no means, for in the former case we approve of the likes and dislikes of the one and disapprove of those of the other and say: Such and such *ought* to be this

man's ideal, whether it really be or not. So that above and beyond all our accidental likes and dislikes we must recognize there are certain things we ought to like, or at any rate, certain things we ought to do. A comprehensive ethical theory is accordingly bound to take account of this idea of obligation, and to explain why we say, for instance, that a man ought to be benevolent. Failing in this task, it has confessed its impotence before one of the fundamental facts of the moral consciousness.

The Intuitional school comes forward here with an explanation of its own. It claims the idea of obligation is unanalyzable and unique, and is given us directly through the reason, the faculty of intuitive cognitions.<sup>1</sup> By means of this we know that we *ought* to do this and that, utterly regardless of whether we are conscious of any desire to do it or not, and are accordingly convinced that certain ideals may properly be termed *right*, and others *wrong*. No one would deny to such a hypothesis a certain air of plausibility. But as it involves the introduction of several new elements, and we must not allow ourselves to offend against the law of parcimony, which requires us to proceed with the smallest number of principles possible, it is necessary to at least make the attempt to explain the phenomena here presented us by means of the well-known facts admitted by every school. With this end in view we will return to our typical altruist of the first chapter, and endeavor to trace the genesis of the idea of obligation in him.

The fundamental notion with which we have here to do, is that of approbation and disapprobation. We

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<sup>1</sup> See *Methods of Ethics* Bk. I Ch. III, where the standard intuitionalistic view is presented and defended. In proof of this statement observe for instance the approval with which it is cited by Martineau in *Types of Ethical Theory* II 94—96.

begin by observing that the direction of this class of judgments is determined in the first instance, at any rate, by the fitness of things to the accomplishment of the ends that are the objects of desire. Accordingly, the supreme ideal of the altruist being what it is, his approbation and disapprobation of particular actions will be distributed according as they are calculated to contribute towards its realization, *and this will be as true of others' actions as of his own*. Whether he ordered beefsteak or oysters for lunch yesterday, he probably does not care, but it can not be a matter of indifference to him whether he neglected an opportunity to improve his own financial condition, we will say, or that of a friend, to whom a word on his part might have meant a great deal. For precisely this same reason it may be all the same to him whether his neighbor passes his leisure time in reading the newspaper or playing cards, but he does not feel indifferent any longer when the same man spends his evenings squandering the money his family needs to supply them with the decencies and comforts of life. For with his broad sympathies, the privations and suffering thus entailed upon a group of dependent beings come home to him as closely as if they were his own. And this principle will hold wherever he looks in the world. In so far as his desires are directed towards the happiness of his kind, the labors of those who with him are busy upon the great work of making man's life richer and better, he will view with approbation, while those who are engaged in pulling down the structure he is helping slowly and painfully to build up, can not but be the objects of an intense feeling of disapprobation.

Where we are possessed with a strong desire for a person to do a particular thing, whatever it be, we do

not allow matters to stop with a mere emotion of disapprobation when he fails to respond to our expectations; we appear before him with a demand that the deed be done, or under other circumstances, that it be left undone, a demand which owes a large share of the energy with which it is expressed, not so much to the disapprobation pure and simple, as to the resentment against the offender which almost invariably follows in its train. Imperious natures do this upon the most trivial occasion; not only where another appears to be about to interfere with far-reaching plans of their own, but also when they exhibit little disagreeable traits, whether in dress or habits. In matters of mere taste however, the average man will not go so far as to make a formal complaint with a request that the offense cease; what agonies have many of us endured at hotel tables from certain peculiarities in the manners of the excellent person opposite us, and all without anything more than an inner protest. But absolutely cruel treatment is almost sure to bring the cry of Halt! from the sufferer if he possess the slightest trace of combativeness or resentment in his disposition, and this demand will be echoed by the sympathetic spectator.

We may conceive of a grade of intelligence where every desire to have things act in a given way is immediately followed by a demand upon the person, animal, or thing, to act in the manner desired. But with increase of knowledge we soon discover that certain things are possible, and others impossible, and learn to confine our demands within the limits of the former. We no longer command the wind to cease blowing, the lion to drop his prey, the Australian savage to understand Plato. And so anyone conscious of an unwelcome pressure of our will upon him, has one way open to him (and but

one besides flight) to free himself from it, and that is to demonstrate the impossibility of a compliance on his part with what we ask of him<sup>1</sup>. The methods he employs for this purpose may indeed be various, but the underlying principle is always the same. Perhaps his reasonings may reduce themselves to one of two forms. He may, on the one hand, try to show that the desire which finds expression in this particular demand is incompatible with and excludes the realization of some other stronger and more permanent desire, which he knows us to cherish; for instance, that indiscriminate charity, although it would doubtless relieve present need, would in the end do the receiver of it more harm than good; or he appeals to our interest in *his* happiness and shows that the sacrifice we ask of him would cost him more than any one else would gain by it; or taking a different turn, he appeals to our own personal interests, and hints that insistence upon our demand will lead to its being made upon us, in due time, either by himself or others. Or, on the other hand, it is open to him to attempt to show that the general assumption in regard to human nature upon which we have based our particular claims, is false. He is a member of the *genus homo*, with all its general characteristics it is true, but with nothing more; accordingly, as he reminds us, when we appeal to something he does not possess, we are asking impossibilities. Whether the arguments by which he seeks to establish his major premise are to the point or not, is in the first

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<sup>1</sup> This intimate relation between the conception of obligation and possibility is recognized by Kant in his famous reference to the consciousness, "dass man es *könne*, weil unsere eigene Vernunft dieses als ihr Gebot anerkennt und sagt, dass man es *thun solle*." See *Kr. d. prakt. Vernunft* S. 165 (Werke, Bd. V).



instance of no significance; provided he believes in them he will not fail to urge them, and if he succeeds in convincing us we will withdraw the demand. Sometimes he employs the *argumentum ad hominem* with this end in view: judging by your conduct, you seem to find no motive within yourself for so doing, why do you expect then to find it in me? Or he may appeal to the facts of daily life. No man, he says, ever did such a thing, or if there has been one here and there who did, he must have been quite exceptionally organized, differently from me at any rate. This is, on the one hand, a favorite mode of reasoning, on the other, one which somehow seldom operates to produce conviction. The great argument in his own mind for the impossibility involved in the expectation at the basis of the demand, will always be the conviction that what is being asked of him he would never expect of another, while the secret consciousness that were the places changed, he himself would be making this very same demand, is the only thing that can effectually silence him.

The human race is so constituted that the pressure of one will upon another is capable of exerting no inconsiderable force. Obedience is after all an easy matter, or the absolute monarchy would never have played such a part in history. In the army it may become through drill so natural as to almost appear to partake of the nature of reflex action. The weak will never think of resisting when confronted with a demand made with an air of perfect assurance that it will be followed by instant compliance, and to what lengths the power of one mind over another can be carried, is shown by an incident related by Prof. Preyer in his lectures on Hypnotism. His two years old child was seated at the table and was in the very act of raising a piece of zwieback

to its mouth. The father looked it straight in the eye and in a very positive tone said, "You are not hungry". The child *was* hungry, for he had been without food a considerable time, but the childish will was not even strong enough to affirm its own feelings in the face of the pressure of the father's words, and dropping the zwieback it said, "No, baby not hungry."

But if the impulses within the man, combined with the pressure arising from the fact that he knows you desire and expect a certain action from him, are not sufficient to produce it, you have no means left you to work upon him except the threat of punishment, legal or social, or the promise of a reward. Then it is that the demand shades almost imperceptibly over into the command.

These facts, it is believed, are capable of explaining all the phenomena of moral obligation. "Ought" involves an affirmation, accompanied by an emotion. As the former, it asserts the necessity of a given action as the means to the attainment of a certain end. As the latter, it changes its character within certain limits according to the relation of the subject of the feeling to the end in question, it being possible to thus distinguish four different forms. But the element of constraint is always present and gives it a distinct individuality throughout.

The first *ought* (in logical order) that appeals to a man is no other than Kant's hypothetical imperative, pure and simple; for example, "I ought to take regular exercise", or, "I ought to take care of my health". As a proposition expressing a truth, the former is equivalent to, "I must ---- if I am to have good health;" the latter, "I must ---- if I am to accomplish the work I have set before me", or "if I am to possess one of the principal sources of happiness," etc. It is by no

means necessary that the desired end should terminate in self; on the contrary, a man who has any regard for the welfare of his child will say, "I ought to give him an education"; a man of patriotism, "I ought to take some part in the political life of my country"; the humanitarian, "I ought to cultivate all my talents and develop all my powers of usefulness". The corresponding emotion in all these cases is a pure feeling of constraint. This is due on the one hand to a certain unwillingness to undergo the required privation or pain (for we do not ordinarily speak of being obliged except where some kind of self-sacrifice is involved); on the other, to the consciousness of the absolute necessity of the action for the realization of the wished-for end. When the will has been weak and we have failed to do what we ought to have done (in this sense), there we feel disapprobation and regret, mingled oftentimes with aesthetic displeasure and disgust.

The second form of the idea of obligation is the simple "you ought". Of this there are two quite distinct varieties. The first is that of mere advice, e. g. "You ought to take regular exercise". This does not necessarily imply any interest for the other person, or a care whether he does it or not. It is simply another way of saying "You must - - - if you are going to have good health", the only difference between the two being that the former rather presupposes the existence of a desire on your part for the benefit to be gained, while the latter confines itself to a pure statement of facts. But the accompanying emotions are of a decidedly different nature where the action in question is viewed primarily as something that is necessary to the satisfaction of some desire or the realization of some end *of my own*. When I say to a man, "You ought to

educate your children", this is indeed only interpretable as, "You must - - - if your children are to be prepared for the highest happiness and usefulness". But if the welfare of this group of dependent beings is an object of concern to *me personally*, it calls up a far different set of feelings than if I am doing nothing more than directing the attention of the father, in an indifferent sort of a way, to the relation between the education of the young and success in life. What is affirmed in the one case with all the coolness with which one might lay down the proposition  $a = a$ , now takes on more of the form of a demand, and the accompanying emotion is the consciousness of a desire to *constrain*, to bring a direct pressure to bear upon the other's will. The same feeling will evidently be present when I say, "You ought to devote yourself to the welfare of our Fatherland" — or, "to that of humanity". In case of the failure of the other to respond, we have once more disapprobation and dislike, and in this instance perhaps the additional element of resentment.

But the more impersonal forms of obligation are those with which the notion is generally associated, so that they will be recognized as the most familiar. In the case of the "I ought", this appears when to the feeling of constraint, due to the necessity of the action to the attainment of the desired end, is added the consciousness of the pressure of other wills — in the last instance, that of the whole community — upon my own. The impersonal form of the "you ought", is composed of a similar group of elements; here I feel that the desire which motives my demand is shared by others, perhaps by all, and that among this number would be the very man himself, if he did not happen to be the one called upon to make the necessary sacrifice. Hence

not only the objectivity of my judgment, but also the feeling of security with which it is put forth, for in the consensus of all I see the proof that nothing impossible has been asked for. Hence too, in case of a failure to comply, the feeling that it is not so much I as "humanity in me", that has been defied.

It is here that the theological "ought" finds its systematic place. In this case it is the Deity instead of a fellow-man or society in general who expects the action from me, or whose approval and sympathy I know accompany my demand upon some third person. For one who *realizes* the existence of God, the impulses to respond to an expectation coming from such a source are of very great strength. To the tendency so natural to man to guide his conduct by what others approve and disapprove, are here added the consciousness of the fruitlessness of all opposition in view of the omnipotence of the Creator, and the gratitude set flowing at the thought of his love. In bringing one's will to bear upon another, the belief that an omniscient Being echoes our demands gives us a feeling of confidence in the possibility of compliance (as above defined, p. 119) such as could scarcely be attained in any other way. All these factors combine to give this form of the feeling of obligation at first sight an entirely unique character. But it will be found on examination to be made up of just the same elements as may be met with under the various conditions of human society, differing from anything this latter has to show at most only in degree.

We are now able to explain without difficulty the origin of an aesthetic *ought*. We have seen that the range of our demands has a tendency to extend itself till it covers the entire field of our personal likes

and dislikes, the urgency with which compliance is insisted upon of course diminishing with the importance of the end in our eyes, till it finally dies entirely away. If the thought of drunkenness or promiscuity is disgusting, this will accordingly be ground enough to make me condemn it as *wrong*, i. e. as something that ought not to be indulged in. If the courage required to face the truth is for me an inspiring sight, I will never allow myself to be disappointed of an expected exhibition without a protest and a lively affirmation of contempt for the cowardice displayed. The same principle holds good of the struggle for freedom, the pursuit of culture, the ability to perceive and enjoy the beautiful, etc. For each involves in its own way the possession of power, either of mind or of will or both, and these are admired when present, while weakness and sluggishness are distinctively and positively unpleasant. Turning our gaze from individuals to the world at large, we observe that everyone of us has an ideal of society more or less distinctly outlined in imagination, which, like the artist, he wishes to behold transferred to the canvas of life. Upon this grand painting every member of the human race is working and must work, either for better or for worse, the overwhelming majority confined to some little square, a few however engaged in outlining or filling in great sections. In proportion as we are active workers and accordingly feel a sense of proprietorship, as if it were in some sort our own, must necessarily grow the imperiousness of our demands that the painting be not spoiled either in plan or execution. And this is just as true when the ideal is an aesthetic one, when what is desired above all else is a state of society that offers an interesting, inspiring, or picturesque spectacle, as when the only condition accepted as satisfactory is

one in which the greatest possible happiness of the community is realized.

The broad range of our actual ordinary judgments of approbation and disapprobation is, at first sight at least, one of the most perplexing facts which the Utilitarian theory is called upon to explain. There is no doubt that the lists which the Intuitionists draw up correspond more nearly to the instinctive judgments of perhaps all of us than the Utilitarian is ordinarily willing to admit. The latter quietly selects from all the various grounds upon which approbation and its contrary are commonly dealt out, a single one, the feeling of altruism, and confines his demands to what this requires. Such an operation is apt to strike one as exceedingly arbitrary, but in reality it is quite the reverse, for it is based upon a clear perception of the limits of the possible (as already defined), above all of the compossible — to borrow a term from Leibnitz; for as has already been shown (above, p. 112 flg.), the attempt to enforce matters of taste is inconsistent with the broad altruism which looks upon another's happiness as of the same value with one's own. Not that he henceforth becomes a stranger to the impulse to set up indiscriminately his various likes and dislikes as a rule for the actions of others, but he controls it, just as he does his impulse to revenge. And it is a fact well worth noting, that after all, as far as his commands are concerned, the aesthetic moralist keeps fairly well within the limits of what is required for the welfare of society. Of course he scorns to justify them by a reference to their relation to the same, but none the less some such relation will usually be found to exist. From which it would appear that even in the temperament which has produced this school of thinkers, a greater or less share

of altruism must come in, although without doubt unconsciously, to reinforce the taste, before the latter feels strong enough to urge its demands in the face of the opposition of a refractory world, which is only too suspicious of the least appearance of arbitrariness in the prescriptions of its moral guides.

If it be true that whenever we want a person to perform a certain action, we have an instinctive impulse to impose an *ought*, it may be asked why the absolute egoist does not feel the world ought to serve him. For in such an instance there is no altruism to restrain him as in the cases just cited. But we have seen that we limit our demands by our conception of possibilities, too; and so, ignorant — as we assume him — of what a disinterested impulse means, he never expects anything else than that his fellow-men shall try to cheat and get ahead of him, as he is trying to do to them, and feels no more surprise or resentment towards them when they succeed, than he might at a wild beast holding him in its clutches. He would accordingly as soon think of demanding mercy from the one as from the other.

It is now possible for us to justify the apparently paradoxical statement that “right” and “wrong” are always used with tacit — if not express — reference to some ulterior end, and yet may be applied to ultimate ends or to the adoption of ends as ultimate<sup>1</sup>. Given a person filled with the love of his fellow-men, and he must not only disapprove of all attacks upon their happiness, he will demand that they cease, and the sum of all his demands will be this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. For if I desire another to so regulate his separate actions that they

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<sup>1</sup> See *Methods of Ethics*, p. 33.



will be in harmony with my ideal, so much the more will this hold of his choice of final ends, by which the former will be determined. If it be claimed that according to this view there are as many kinds of "right" as there are species of ideals, this is cheerfully admitted. If in accordance with the one it be true that "truth ought to be spoken", and with the other, that "truth ought not to be spoken", here is no contradiction<sup>1</sup>, for these statements involve relative terms like "above" and "below", "left" and "right", as when we say in the evening, the sun is going down, although to the inhabitants of China it is coming up. If no two persons had the same ideal we should perhaps no longer clothe our demands in the declarative form, "you ought", we should confine ourselves to the imperative instead. As a matter of fact however we find that we may assume the widespread existence of certain emotions in greater or less intensity, and where they are absent we simply exclude the person from the class of moral beings. With the exception of such isolated cases, we know certain demands are sure to awaken an echo — be it faint or strong — in every human breast. In other words, on account of the practical uniformity of human nature there is a practical uniformity of demands and therefore in the use of the terms "ought" and "ought not". So that we really apply them with a precision which could only be equaled by such an expression as "the sun is going down", in case there were no antipodes.

If all this be true however, a man without the trace of a disinterested impulse could never say to himself, "I ought to love my neighbor", any more than he could pull himself up by his boot-straps. Where apparently

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<sup>1</sup> See *Methods of Ethics*, p. 28.

through and through selfish men actually do this, it is due to the fact that they feel, at least in quiet hours when self has withdrawn a little for the time, the impulses of altruism, or the charm of a beautiful character, to the attainment of which latter unselfishness is a necessary condition, one or both being combined perhaps with the consciousness of the pressure of the will of another or of others upon them. And although the absolute egoist is doubtless a mythical creature, I think we may convince ourselves of the essential truth of this position by the results of a single attempt to awaken moral ideas in one who anywhere nearly approaches this type. Where you can find nothing either in Heaven or on earth that he cares about, you will talk to him of obligation in vain.

The part played by the pressure of a foreign will in the phenomena of moral obligation explains the intimate relation between "you ought" and "you must". In the former case we assume the existence in you of an at least latent desire corresponding with our own, which the pressure of our will may awaken. I take it for granted that my ideal will find at any rate so much of an echo in your heart that it will command approval in the abstract, even if it be not able to rouse you to action in this special instance. I assume in other words that you would like to see the action done, if it were not for the fact that in this particular case you must bear the pain or toil of doing it. When I say "you must", on the other hand, I presuppose no such ideal in you, but am none the less determined to have my own way. I accordingly try to work upon the natural impulse to obedience already noticed, or this failing of its effect, appeal to the sole motive there is left, namely to force or to the aversion from pain. The only "ought"

which Paley's ears were able to hear, was in reality just such a "must" as this latter, as is evident from the report he gave of it. "A man is said to be *obliged*" he tells us, "when he is urged by a violent motive resulting from the command of another".<sup>1</sup> And as is well known, this "violent motive" consisted in the fear of eternal torment on the one hand, and the hope of eternal happiness, on the other.

It thus appears that when the element of the *good*, or that which is capable of clothing itself in the form of an ideal, is taken out of the conception of obligation, this latter degenerates into what is nothing more than mere submission to an arbitrary imperative. In view of this circumstance it can never be the fundamental fact of the moral experience. It is true that we have a natural impulse, as already remarked, to yield to the pressure of the will of others, especially when this pressure is felt as that of the will of the omnipotent Creator and Preserver of the universe, and the workings of this tendency are often very strikingly displayed in the sphere of morality. But the unconditional surrender to mere power can never meet with the approval of a through and through altruist, nor is it even in harmony with the ordinary judgments of every day life. Prometheus, chained to the rocks for bringing the gift of fire to the wretched barbarous inhabitants of the earth, in defiance of the will of the "Father of gods and men", is one of the grandest productions of the human imagination, and were the Supreme Being such a one as Augustine and Calvin imagined him, we should despise the wretched slaves that licked the dust at his feet. The authority of the Deity does not lie in his infinite power, or else

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<sup>1</sup> *Moral Philosophy*, Bk. II ch. II.

we shall have to admit that "might makes right;" it is as we believe him a God and not a Devil, that is to say, when we find in him the same ideals which appeal to us and which we long to have control us more absolutely, then and only then can we feel that what he wills is right, and even then the man of uncompromising morality obeys because it is right rather than because it is commanded. Religion may indeed give us much that will strengthen the impulse to virtue. To it we may owe the support due to the assurance of the sympathy of at least one other being in the Universe in all that we do; to it the steadying influence arising from the consciousness that the eye of one is upon us who sees and notes each action great and small, and who can read the profoundest secrets of the heart as the words upon an open page; to it above all the joyful assurance of the final victory of the cause for which we battle. These are great and important services, but farther it can not go, for the will of God in itself is incapable of supplying us with the foundation for the distinction between right and wrong. This must be sought in something that appeals to us as a good, and the ultimate criterion by which we measure out approbation can be supplied by nothing else than our chosen ideal.









